

HATCH OFF! FOCUS RS VS. WRX STI VS. GOLF R

CAR DRIVER

MAY 2016

SNEAK PREVIEW

ALL THE GOOD STUFF
COMING FOR
2017 AND BEYOND

JEEP WRANGLER
PICKUP



CHEVROLET CAMARO ZL1



PORSCHE 911 R

CARS WORTH WAITING FOR!

PLUS

IN CASE THE AVENTADOR SV
WASN'T INSANE ENOUGH

LAMBO CENTENARIO

DRIVEN: NEW MERCEDES-BENZ E-CLASS,
HONDA CIVIC COUPE, MINI CONVERTIBLE

THE STORY OF THE ALL-NEW 2016

MALIBU HYBRID

AS TOLD FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT

The all-new 2016 Chevrolet Malibu Hybrid is taking efficiency to the next level while providing power that you might not expect in a midsize car. We sat down with the GM Global Chief Engineer for Hybrid and Electric Drive Units to hear firsthand about what makes this vehicle such a breakthrough.



Preproduction model shown throughout. Actual production model may vary. Available Spring 2016.





JASON B. DITMAN

GLOBAL CHIEF ENGINEER,
HYBRID AND ELECTRIC DRIVE UNITS

What makes the all-new 2016 Malibu Hybrid so different from other hybrid vehicles?

It's a new hybrid system specifically calibrated for a midsize car. Several things make it different, including the flexibility of a new two-mode hybrid system, the advanced technology of our batteries, and a unique Exhaust Gas Heat Recovery system. These all work together to optimize driving performance *and* efficiency. Malibu Hybrid uses our new two-mode hybrid system to give us greater flexibility in using two electric motors with an efficient new 1.8L gas engine. Like other hybrids, we accelerate from stop using an electric motor and travel at moderate speeds before the gas engine is needed. Our new hybrid system has the flexibility to keep using the electric motors with the gas engine for additional power and performance,

or the motors can operate by themselves for efficiency when cruising at moderate speeds. So you don't have to compromise your drive for efficiency.

Another difference is our battery. The all-new Malibu Hybrid uses advanced battery technology. We have taken a step forward from battery packs found in the first-generation Volt. Our new lithium-ion battery technology, shared with the second-generation Volt, delivers more power in less space and does so more cost effectively (a low cost per kilowatt hour) than anything we've used before. Then there's our new Exhaust Gas Heat Recovery (EGHR) system. The EGHR can help save energy in cold weather by harnessing previously lost energy. The proof is in the mileage. The new Malibu Hybrid is expected to offer a remarkable estimated 48 MPG city.¹

*“You don't have to compromise
your drive for efficiency.”*

Jason B. Ditman

GLOBAL CHIEF ENGINEER, HYBRID AND ELECTRIC DRIVE UNITS

How does the efficiency of the Malibu Hybrid system translate to the driver's experience behind the wheel?

It's a lot of fun to drive. Because the motor is tuned for a midsize car, it offers better performance. The two-mode operation lets us provide an exhilarating driving experience and also saves gas as compared to the 2016 Malibu with a 1.5L engine.² The electric motor has some zippy torque. Unlike a gas engine, which takes time to ramp up, the instant torque of the electric motor allows Malibu Hybrid to accelerate quickly. The two-mode system can employ the gas engine more selectively and more efficiently. This can translate into fewer stops at the pump. In terms of architecture, we've been able to engineer the battery to lie flat and maximize trunk space. It's also a pretty sweet-looking ride.

We understand that GM has developed a new electrification platform that supports both HEVs and plug-in electric vehicles. How did you arrive at this and what are its advantages?

Our real-world experience with Volt has advanced our knowledge of how to use electric motors and gasoline engines together for greater efficiency and greater performance. We've applied all of our learnings to create a single platform. This platform can now support hybrid electric vehicles (like Malibu Hybrid) as well as plug-in electric vehicles (like Volt). The new Malibu Hybrid is the first Chevrolet vehicle, after Volt, to bring this platform to market. And our electrification expertise doesn't stop there. This Fall we're launching the 2017 Bolt EV,³ an all-electric vehicle that is expected to offer an estimated more than 200 miles⁴ of range on a single charge for an affordable price.⁵ Malibu Hybrid, Volt and Bolt EV are going to change the way you think about electrification.



¹ GM-estimated 48 MPG city/45 highway. Official EPA estimates not yet available. Fuel economy estimates based on GM testing. ² Malibu with 1.5L engine EPA-estimated 27 MPG city/37 highway. ³ Available late 2016. ⁴ Based on GM estimates. EPA estimates not yet available. Actual range varies with conditions. ⁵ Priced as low as \$30,000 after federal tax credit. Net price shown includes the full \$7,500 tax credit. \$37,500 MSRP including Destination Freight Charge with tax credit from \$0 up to \$7,500. Tax, title, license and dealer fees extra. Actual savings from the federal government depend on your tax situation. Consult your tax professional for details.



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FEATURE

**25 CARS
WORTH**

WAITING FOR

Our guide to the most compelling vehicles automakers will bring to market over the next four years.

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HIGH**

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by Jeff Sabatini

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FIRST DRIVE

**ASTON MARTIN
LAGONDA
TARAF**

The Lagonda returns as the world's first million-dollar sedan.

by Mike Duff

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COMPARISON TEST

FRENCH BULLDOGS

Ford Focus RS, Subaru WRX
STI, Volkswagen Golf R.

by Mike Duff



ON THE COVER

The Chevrolet Camaro ZL1, Jeep Wrangler pickup, and Porsche 911 R. Collect them all!

photography by

Roy Ritchie,

rendering by

Radovan Varicak



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caranddriver.com

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COMING THIS SPRING: THE CAR AND DRIVER PODCAST

Hear a preview during the New York International Auto Show, with episodes available for download from iTunes beginning on March 25. Our editorial team will deliver intelligent and irreverent reports from the show, with full episodes to follow. More fun than a transistor radio!

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EDDIE ALTERMAN

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A V-6 pony car without the V-6-pony-car shame.

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A reader writes: You must be on drugs and stupid test drivers. False! We haven't been on a stupid test driver in some time.

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WHAT I'D DO DIFFERENTLY

Burt Reynolds.

▼ ON THE WEB

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INSTRUMENTED TEST

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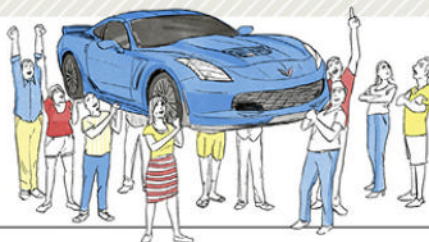
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backfires

□ hosted by ED.

007
05.2016



CHANGES

When the February issue arrived, I had to check the cover to be sure you didn't send out the April Fools' edition early. The caption "America, meet your new sports-car king" was just about as convincing as the Ford commercials of yore, proudly proclaiming that the Mustang was certified a sports car by the United States Auto Club. When you want to compare sports cars, the cars in the comparo should all BE sports cars. Your February cover and article only featured one. Hint: It was the blue one.

RICH FRAYSIER
CHARLES TOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

Seriously? Four straight months of Mustangs on the cover? Did you hire that woman from *Seinfeld* who wore the same dress every day to choose your cover art? I almost missed my February issue

when my wife came home and told me I already had the issue with the red Mustang on the cover.

BILL BRUINS
JOHNSTOWN, ONTARIO

This might be a mean thing to say, but I can't help noticing the correlation between February's back cover and the heavier, slower car winning the comparison test. I'll reserve judgment till I drive it, though. Beating the Vette is going to be a tall order.

YIANNIS TSOUNIS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Your February cover "Mustang Beats Corvette" should have been subtitled "but only in the reviewer's mind" because the facts and figures say otherwise. This guy is good enough to go into politics!

GARY HARTZFELD
DAVISON, MICHIGAN

higher top speed and better roadholding, stops better, has more mpg, is lighter by a bunch, and on and on. But, wait, the 2-point win for the Mustang: Why? Because it's cheaper! Five points for the "as-tested price." And, there's more. The big gripe is the Corvette's steering, while the Mustang's is "nice." What happened to the Mustang's steering, which you described as "dull" with "confidence-sapping numbness" in the November 2015 issue? I guess the magic Ford genie popped out of the lamp and fixed it for this comparison test! Sorry, guys; your credibility is shot with this one.

ARTHUR J. NASTRE
NORTH BELLMORE, NEW YORK

It sapped the confidence of one editor but others were not sapped. That happens—Ed.

Even though the Corvette beat the Mustang in almost every performance category—zero to 60, quarter-mile, top speed, braking, roadholding, fuel economy, and even cargo volume—you still picked the Mustang over the Corvette. My advice to you is to stop drinking the Kool-Aid.

FRED PANE
OMAHA, NEBRASKA

LET'S DANCE

I can't wait for the May issue to hear from the Corvette owners.

GREG Z.
ANNANDALE, VIRGINIA

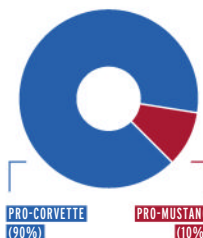
I had to smile just looking at the February 2016 cover. The sh*t's going to hit the fan on this article! I've owned some great Mustangs—1966 GT350s, 1970 Boss 302, Competition Prep and street SVOs, and three Cobra Mustangs—as well as three Corvettes, so I have no skin in the game. Hats off to the C7 and the new GT350.

Congratulations to you for equipping the two great cars for a fair fight. Let the coulda, woulda, shoulda fighting begin!

WES BURMARK
FOX ISLAND, WASHINGTON

Mustang Beats Corvette ["Red, Fight, and Blue"]! Seriously? No. Look closely and you see that the Corvette won this comparison overwhelmingly. The Corvette is quicker to 60, faster on the track by far, has a

★ DEFENDING THE CORVETTE



What does the Kool-Aid man say? Oh, yeah!—Ed.

Anyone who thinks a Mustang is more "fun to drive" than a C7 Corvette needs serious counseling. Way to rig the scoring and let the Mustang win.

JEFF STEBAR
FAYETTEVILLE, GEORGIA

You must be on drugs and stupid test drivers to put a Mustang in front of a Corvette. Get a life you are fools and will

candle [sic] my subscription on your trash
how much did Ford give you morons.

LARRY RITZKE

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

I dated a woman with cankles. Needless to say, she didn't become Mrs. Ed—Ed.

The “as-tested price” needs to be updated to “market price.” The Corvette’s roughly \$14K disadvantage would turn out to be minimal with Ford dealers charging over sticker and Vette dealers making deals. The net difference will be \$3K–\$4K.

You should’ve thrown the M4 in the mix and let it take a butt-whuppin’.

TOM SMITH

LAKE VILLAGE, ARKANSAS

Your Shelby GT350 and Corvette comparison said, “Mustangs were never really intended to battle Corvettes.” While this is true for most Mustangs, we’re talking Shelby Mustangs. And, starting in 1965, Shelby Mustangs were *always* intended to outperform Corvettes on the track. Car magazines have been comparing them since the mid-1960s.

STEVE KINCH

MUNDELEIN, ILLINOIS

Loved the reference to the “Sybian” in the February issue regarding the Mustang Shelby GT350. Some of your older or less-internet-savvy readers may be quite shocked when they Google that term. Literally LOL reading this at work.

CHRIS BAHAM

MEDFORD, OREGON

Loved the article, but you did not mention a significant difference between the two vehicles: You can walk into a Chevy dealership and buy a Corvette.

DAN BLOOMER

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Pund can keep his Sybian. I’ll keep my Vette.

EDD CHENOWETH

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

OH! YOU PRETTY THINGS

I’m of the belief that wealthy folks are free to purchase anything they want without being criticized [“Mass & Class,” February 2016]. As such, I have no

. editor’s letter

Have you ever replaced the exhaust system on your car in search of a little extra performance? Ever reflashed your ECM? Or worse, ever gone whole-hog and built a competition car out of a street machine? Congratulations. According to a recently proposed regulation, the EPA wants to make you an outlaw.

Now the good news: This is nothing new. The EPA’s first amendment to the Clean Air Act in 1970 set out to restrict owners from altering their cars’ emissions controls. And you’ll notice from all the aftermarket respiratory parts for sale that the EPA has been wildly ineffective in this pursuit. This past summer’s proposal seeks to expand that antitampering measure from “motor vehicles,” defined as “any self-propelled vehicle designed for transporting persons or property on a street or a highway,” to “non-road engines converted for competition use.”

On the surface, the EPA’s wording looks scary for grass-roots racers. But remember, these are the clowns who had to be told by a university in West Virginia that Volkswagen was cheating on its cars’ emissions. This closing of loopholes could be seen as a face-saving move by the EPA after the embarrassment of Dieselgate, but it will be as unenforceable on the little guy as its self-certifying emissions testing is lenient on carmakers.

Those in the cross hairs, however, are bigger targets, such as aftermarket-parts makers and sanctioning bodies. I spoke with 24 Hours of LeMons’ honcho Jay Lamm about it, and he’s appropriately freaked out. He thinks we should start a campaign called “Keep Your Laws Off My F-Body.” I can support that. Even if this is the EPA we’re talking about, and even if it’s gone on record as saying it’s not going to punish cars driven only on the track, it behooves us all to go to SEMA.org and sign the petition to keep the government out of the nonexistent passenger’s seat.



Eddie Alterman

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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backfires

problem if a well-heeled individual wants to add an expensive toy to their stable. But if any of your readers are actually considering the purchase of a Bentley Bentayga with the \$160,000 clock option, could they send any spare change they might have to a retiree living on Social Security and a small, fragile 401(k)?

PAUL DAVIS

GRANTS PASS, OREGON

ALWAYS CRASHING IN THE SAME CAR

As enthusiasts, we must remember one important avenue to avoid the impending autonomous-automobile apocalypse ["Going to the Dogs," February 2016]: Don't purchase the product.

JONATHAN MILLER

BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA

Rest easy: Autonomous cars will never happen in America. When an autonomous car crashes—don't say they can't—and it's proven that the car's autopilot was in control at the time, liability attorneys will swoop in and sue the socks off the car manufacturer. Whether or not automakers develop the technology to the point that autonomous cars can be sold to consumers, the cost of litigation will keep them from becoming reality. And besides, who would trust their autonomous pod to navigate the Midwest's pothole-infested, crumbling, ice-covered roadways during a blizzard?

STEPHEN COOL

KIDDER, MISSOURI

A self-driving car is technically amazing. But who cares? It's like a self-eating hamburger, or a self-surfing board, or a self-kissing girlfriend! People who hate driving might want a self-driving car. But I don't want some computer, no matter how amazing, to take my driving fun away from me.

JIM HELDBERG

PACIFICA, CALIFORNIA



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NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROAD



BY JASON BURELLE

The best thing about everyday life is that new opportunities await around every turn. One morning I was driving to my job in Toronto and the next I was taking off for New York City to start a whole new career. Of course, you have to be fully equipped for such a drastic move. That's why it's important to find a ride with as much hustle and drive as you.

**"A RIDE THAT'S BETTER
CONNECTED CAN TAKE
YOU FARTHER THAN
YOU EVER IMAGINED."**

A ride that's better connected can take you farther than you ever imagined. The new chapter in my life started with the spark of an ignition. As the engine came to life, it fueled the excitement I felt for the road ahead. I drove past the shimmering Great Lakes and I felt firsthand that a great journey is more than getting from point A to B — it's about enjoying the ride.

TURN FOR MORE >

It is about time that *C/D* did a review of the various new self-driving technologies. I hope to see this as a continuous feature in the magazine.

JERRY APPELL
PALM CITY, FLORIDA

It should be required that autonomous cars be preceded by a man walking in front carrying a red flag.

LARRY KENWORTHY
GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND

Car and Driver, right? Eight pages of driverless cars in the February 2016 issue. Did I miss the point? Cute dog, though.

DAN WINAND
LAUREL, MARYLAND

HEROES

Either you guys have a very special Humvee, or you're all very special ["Buy American," February 2016]. Last time I checked, all 6.2- and 6.5-liter diesels are indirect injection; a trip to wikiHow might teach your writers the difference.

IAN BURGLER
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

Check again, Burgler. These older pre-chamber designs are considered direct injection since the fuel travels into the combustion chamber unimpeded—Ed.

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Your long-term Honda Fit needed its warped rotors resurfaced ["It Contains

Multitudes," February 2016]. Did you forget that that car did a 3:37.7 at VIR?

MARK NEDDE

MADISON, NEW JERSEY

The Fit's rotors warped before its turn at Lightning Lap—Ed.

SENSE OF DOUBT

Whilst reading your review [Drivelines, February 2016] of the Nissan Titan XD, a.k.a. the world's most irrelevant truck, I was appalled, as a 6.7 Cummins turbo-diesel driver, at the 660 pound-feet torque rating you quoted for the 6.7 Cummins. It's 865 pound-feet now. I think you'd have to go back 10 years for it to have that little torque. Golly.

STEVE HEREJK

PORT MOODY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Golly, you're not right. In 2016, the manual version of the 6.7 has 660 pound-feet; the automatic has 800 pound-feet. There is a version of the 6.7 in 3500s that makes 900 pound-feet with the automatic—Ed.

STATION TO STATION

Somebody needs to explain how the Tesla Model S P90D's [Drivelines, February 2016] 259 horsepower front and 503 horsepower rear equal 532. I did the math. It is 762. You are welcome.

JOHN MULLER

HUNTSVILLE, ONTARIO

The battery and power electronics cannot supply 762 horsepower worth of juice. Net peak output is indeed 532 horsepower—Ed.

PRESENTING

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THE
CAR AND DRIVER
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THE HOTTEST
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. backfires

I like your little Shell V-Power icon included in the test results of the Tesla Model S P90D in the February issue.

SCOTT POWELL

MEREDITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

LITTLE WONDER

The piece about the work of Michael Paul Smith was interesting ["Theater of the Mind," February 2016]. Some of the math didn't add up, though. If the scale of the dioramas is 1/24th, then one real-life foot becomes a half-inch in the diorama. Phillips referred to Smith using an eye-level perspective, which he said was that of "a person four inches tall." I don't think so; that would correspond to a real-life height of eight feet! I have observed that math is not a strong skill among journalists or politicians.

MARK OLESNICKI

O'FALLON, MISSOURI

C'mon, Olesnicki, like you've never added an inch—Ed.

WORD ON A WING

The first paragraph of Robinson's opinion piece ["Mazda Swings by Some Lucky Threads," February 2016] was a complete waste of paper, ink, and everyone's time. You seem to think that readers give a rat's behind about your health problems, pets, and hotel choices. I would not like to be the person who rented that room after wild birds had stayed there. I read C/D for facts, impressions, and opinions about cars and trucks, not political, social, or economic blather.

JERRY CICCONE

TAYLOR, MICHIGAN

You really wouldn't like Robinson's Facebook wall. It's like 90-percent bird videos on there—Ed.

LOVE IS LOST

Ezra, I don't care what the others say ["Well, You Can't Please Everyone," February 2016]. I like your style. Keep it up. "...delusions of grandeur to assume



**LETTER OF
THE MONTH**

John Phillips's interview of Connie Kalitta reminded me that I owed Mr. Kalitta a word of thanks. His creative use of invective whilst rebuilding his Top Fuel engine at the Detroit Dragway greatly enriched my limited stock of swear words when I was 12.

STEVE SZILVAGYI

ONEKAMA, MICHIGAN

What's with all the "whilsts," people?—Ed.

that Porsche even cares." Good stuff.

ANDREW GIBSON

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

STAR MAN

Thank you for the interview with Connie Kalitta in your February issue [What I'd Do Differently]. From someone who has followed drag racing since the mid-'60s: I learned more about Connie in your interview than in 50 years of reading drag-racing publications. The questions presented were insightful, instead of the usual racing fluff.

STANLEY COGDILL

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

I CAN'T GIVE EVERYTHING AWAY

I have never been so disappointed and unimpressed with myself. As a new subscriber, why the hell did it take me six issues to realize that the entire point of the useless driveline beyond the publisher's masthead page is simply all a setup for subsequent "Backfires"? I obviously need to engage a few more cylinders.

BOB LING

TRUCKEE, CALIFORNIA

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NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE ALL-NEW 2016 CHEVY CRUZE

In the city that never sleeps, or is at least reluctant to go to bed, you have to find a way to pull away from the pack. If you're trying to beat your competitors, you need to think faster and smarter to stay ahead.

As I emerged from the Holland Tunnel and took to the streets of Manhattan, I became very aware of how the car I was driving handled. I was driving the new Chevy Cruze, which was truly responsive and gripped the corners when I needed it most, exactly the edge I'd been searching for.

In a city obsessed with style and design, image is paramount. Fortunately, the 2016 Cruze breaks the mold with its sleek new style. A long body and a low stance give the Cruze an eye-catching athletic build and a whole new feel.

You'd think with its strapping new physique the Cruze might have downgraded in the storage area. But the Cruze wasn't just designed to look good. With the rear seat folded down, the versatile Cruze gave me ample space for my gear.

**"IF YOU'RE TRYING
TO BEAT YOUR
COMPETITORS, YOU
NEED TO THINK
FASTER AND SMARTER
TO STAY AHEAD."**

As I made my way over the Brooklyn Bridge, my mind turned to efficiency and making it that last mile. Fortunately, the all-new 1.4-liter turbocharged engine delivered the perfect balance of power and efficiency, allowing me to go the distance with ease.¹

As dusk turned to dark, I switched on my headlamps and rounded the corner to my new neighborhood. I took comfort not only in the available safety features of the 2016 Cruze, but also in the fact that I chose my travel companion wisely. If you are the company you keep, then the all-new Cruze is truly a keeper.

¹Based on EPA HWY estimate 40 MPG and fuel tank capacity. Your range may be less.



THE FULL PERSPECTIVE

ENTHUSIASTS CAN FEEL CONFIDENT RECOMMENDING THE ALL-NEW 2016 CHEVY CRUZE AND HERE'S WHY:

At first glance, it's easy to see the difference in the all-new 2016 Chevy Cruze. The second generation ups the ante to provide a car that not only looks great, but also offers cutting-edge technology for the ultimate ride.

Access to available 4G LTE Wi-Fi³ means your days of chasing after a few meager power bars are over. When the Cruze is running, you have a more powerful connection than a smartphone's. The revamped available infotainment system lets you use natural voice commands via compatible smartphones while driving.

For drivers focused on fuel economy, the Chevy Cruze offers a new 1.4-liter turbocharged engine.¹ Paired with an available six-speed automatic transmission, it contributes to enviable efficiency in stop-and-go driving. A combination of efficiency and performance, the wide ratio spread allows the Cruze to briskly accelerate from a stop, while the overdriven sixth gear keeps the engine speed lower on the highway.

As far as safety is concerned, the Cruze offers Side Blind Zone Alert, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Lane Keep Assist and Forward Collision Alert, as well as 10 air bags⁵ and four-wheel disc brakes as standard. Safety features are no substitute for the driver's responsibility to operate the vehicle in a safe manner. The driver should remain attentive to traffic, surroundings and road conditions at all times. Read the vehicle's owner's manual for more important safety information.

Akin to the exterior, the Cruze's interior—and the instrument panel, in particular—features lean, muscular and layered surfaces built around the Chevrolet-signature dual-cockpit theme. It's a thoroughly modern design that emphasizes human-technology interaction through a prominent and easily accessible center stack—the perfect melding of man and machine.

CENTER OF ATTRACTION

The new design features aerodynamic sculpting for a noticeably sportier appearance, and available projector-beam headlamps with available LED daytime running lamps.



GOES THE DISTANCE

Offering up to an EPA-estimated 40 MPG HWY and up to a maximum highway range of 530 miles per tank,¹ the all-new standard 1.4L turbo engine offers a balance of efficiency and power so you can go the extra mile and hug every corner.



AT YOUR COMMAND

Stay entertained and connected with standard Chevrolet MyLink² with a 7-inch diagonal color touch-screen, available advanced phone integration and available built-in 4G LTE Wi-Fi.³



FULLY CONNECTED

Cruze offers support for Apple CarPlay⁴ and Android Auto^{TM4}. This intuitive technology lets you interact with your maps, texts, music, and more using voice commands or the MyLink² touch-screen display.



¹Based on EPA HWY estimate 40 MPG and fuel tank capacity. Your range may be less. ²MyLink functionality varies by model. Full functionality requires compatible Bluetooth and smartphone, and USB connectivity for some devices. ³Requires a compatible mobile device, active OnStar service, and data plan. 4G LTE service available in select markets. Visit onstar.com for coverage map, details and system limitations. ⁴Vehicle user interfaces are products of Apple and Google and their terms and privacy statements apply. Requires compatible smartphone, and data plan rates apply. Android AutoTM not currently available on optional 8-inch MyLink touch screen. ⁵Always use safety belts and child restraints. Children are safer when properly secured in a rear seat in the appropriate child restraint. See the Owner's Manual for more information. ⁶The system wirelessly charges one PMA- or Qi-compatible mobile device. Some devices require an adaptor or back cover. To check for phone or other device compatibility, visit mychevrolet.com/learn for details. ⁷Requires compatible mobile device and active OnStar subscription. Visit onstar.com for details and system limitations.

“THE SECOND GENERATION UPS THE ANTE TO PROVIDE A CAR THAT NOT ONLY LOOKS GREAT, BUT ALSO OFFERS CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY FOR THE ULTIMATE RIDE.”



4 (MORE) WAYS THE ALL-NEW 2016 CRUZE STANDS OUT:

- **Available push-button start:** One touch of a button starts the engine so you'll be on your way in a snap.
- **Wireless charging:**⁶ Available wireless charging helps keep your compatible gadgets powered up and ready to go.
- **Bose speakers:** The available Bose® premium 9-speaker system surrounds you with lush sound and makes your commute fly by.
- **OnStar RemoteLink® mobile app:**⁷ This available app allows you to control your Cruze from almost anywhere you go by letting you remotely start your vehicle (if equipped with factory-installed remote start), lock and unlock your doors, and activate your vehicle's horn and lights to help you locate it.



“IT'S A THOROUGHLY MODERN DESIGN THAT EMPHASIZES HUMAN-TECHNOLOGY INTERACTION.”

For more information visit chevrolet.com/cruze





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★ ANNIVERSARIO

PARTY OF TWO — *Its founder's birth isn't the only anniversary Lamborghini is observing in 2016. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Miura, the Lambo that started all the crazy. We hope it has another homage in the works.*

upfront

□ edited by JARED GALL

MORE FIBER PER SERVING. ON THE AVENTADOR, THE HOOD AND FRONT FENDERS ARE ALUMINUM AND THE REAR FENDERS ARE FIBERGLASS. HERE, ALL PANELS ARE CARBON FIBER.



REVEAL OF THE MONTH

Keep It 100

LAMBO'S NEWEST SPECIAL EDITION CELEBRATES THE BIRTH OF ITS FOUNDER. *by Jens Meiners*

AT THE UPPER echelon of the auto industry, the most exclusive brands are increasingly cashing in on limited editions and one-offs. Few companies do it as often as Lamborghini. Its history with such cars has been hit-or-miss, but its latest, the Centenario, meaning the “centenary,” belongs in the former category. Intended to celebrate the 100th birthday of the brand’s founder, Ferruccio Lamborghini, it is faster and lighter than the Aventador LP750-4 Superveloce [see page 104] and packed with technology that will migrate to series-production cars.

POWERTRAIN

Lamborghini’s engineering team squeezed even more power out of its glorious 6.5-liter V-12. Code-named L539, the over-square 60-degree perfect dozen is essentially the same naturally aspirated unit that rages under the hood of the Aventador SV. But revisions to the variable valve timing and the intake and exhaust systems mean it is now rated at 770 PS, or 759 horsepower. That’s up 19



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upfront . REVEAL OF THE MONTH

THAT OTHER ITALIAN SUPERCAR MAKER IS THE ONE COMPETING IN FORMULA 1, BUT LAMBORGHINI'S OUTRAGEOUS DESIGN WORKS BETTER WITH F1-LOOK TIRES.



The Centenario is a fraction of an inch taller than the Aventador and 3.5 inches longer. While the carbon-fiber body panels save weight, the componentry for the rear-wheel steering adds a lot of mass back in.

↑ Figure on seeing that 10.1-inch touchscreen in regular-production Lamborghinis soon. Ditto the integrated cameras and performance recorders.



horses on the SV, and the redline stretches another 100 rpm, to 8600. As in the Aventador, the power routes to all four wheels through a seven-speed automated-manual gearbox.

We expect the same 2.7-second zero-to-60-mph time for the Centenario as we saw in the Aventador SV. For people whose private runways stretch the required distance, the Centenario will hit 186 mph (the even 300-km/h mark) in less than 24 seconds. Research and development boss Maurizio Reggiani wouldn't tell us the top speed, but says the Centenario is governed somewhere "beyond 217 mph."

CHASSIS

As in the Aventador, the Centenario has a carbon-fiber tub at its core. However, unlike that workaday supercar, the Centenario also uses carbon fiber for every body panel, saving a claimed 11 pounds over the SV. Keeping a car on the road at 200-plus

BECAUSE IT'S A MODERN SUPERCAR, THE CENTENARIO BOASTS AN ADJUSTABLE REAR WING. IT EXTENDS NEARLY SIX INCHES AND CAN TILT UP TO 15 DEGREES.



PAINTING THE CENTENARIO RESULTS IN A LESS DRAMATIC CAR BUT ALSO LESSENS THE APPEARANCE OF A CARBON-FIBER SPACE CARP EATING A SUPERCAR.

mph can be challenging. To make it a bit less frightful, the Centenario's aerodynamics are, in Reggiani's words, "improved dramatically. We have close to double the downforce of the normal Aventador, and we also beat the Superverloce."

The Centenario has the requisite integrated, adjustable rear wing, but Lamborghini went one step further with a massive blown diffuser, which dumps the exhaust gases into the slipstream to increase downforce.

The Centenario's other piece of trick stability tech is its four-wheel-steering system that points the rear wheels opposite the fronts at low speeds and in the same direction at high velocities. Reggiani claims it simulates a wheelbase shortened by 9.8 inches, or one stretched by 19.7 inches depending on the situation. Who wouldn't want another 19.7 inches?

And this, ahem, unit will—er, cough—enter other cars in the range. "It would be way too expensive to develop such a system for just 20 or 40 cars," Reggiani says. Expect to see this system on the Aventador in due time.

■ TOO POOR, TOO LATE

Owning a piece of Lamborghini's future won't come cheap: try \$2.4 million. Well, that's for one of the 20 coupes. It's safe to assume that the Centenario roadster, of which there will also be 20, will be even pricier.

But fret not; you didn't have a shot anyway. All Centenarios, both coupes and roadsters, are long spoken for. The project was first shown to prospective buyers at the 2015 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. As with similar special-edition exotics, a limited group of clientele was offered the option to buy a Centenario. Lamborghini knows them so well that it's not bothering to put a clause into the sales contracts that would keep customers from reselling, as is the case with limited editions from Ferrari and other exotic manufacturers. The company trusts—or perhaps has threatened to ensure—that the Centenario won't land in the hands of speculators anytime soon. At least, not if those buyers expect to be in line for the next special edition.



■ DESIGN

The Centenario's shape is a marked departure from Lamborghini's current styling language, with proportions similar to a GT car, elements that evoke Formula 1 cars, and an aggressive tail that offers generous views of the car's structure. Reggiani says it previews the future of Lamborghini design. As if the dazzling shape weren't enough to sear retinas, Centenario buyers will be able to option the car in the naked carbon-fiber finish of the show car. Inside, there's another peek at Lambo's future styling direction. The large touchscreen infotainment system brings the Aventador up to date with Chevys and Fords, but there's still plenty of the brand's signature fighter-jet fantasy in the switchgear and detailing.

FANTASY FACTORY — *Lamborghini churns out special editions with such regularity that you might as well consider them part of its regular lineup.*



2007 REVENTÓN

Launched at the 2007 Frankfurt auto show, the Reventón was basically a Murciélago in a million-dollar body kit. It ushered in Lambo's stealth-fighter phase and previewed the Aventador. The company built 20 coupes, followed by 15 roadsters.



2010 SESTO ELEMENTO

The Sesto Elemento was a Gallardo powertrain encased in carbon fiber—even the front subframe and crash structure were carbon. It wasn't street legal, but Lambo still sold 20.

2013 VENENO

Returning to the street—but not to its senses—Lambo wished itself a happy 50th birthday with the Aventador-based Veneno. It built only three, followed by nine roadsters.



2013 EGOISTA

Two months after the Veneno's reveal, the 50th party continued with this one-off one-seater. Lambo said the canopy was inspired not by a stealth fighter, but by the Apache helicopter.

BUICK CREATED ITS FIREBALL V-6 IN 1961 by pruning two cylinders from a troublesome aluminum V-8. The engine did a stint with Jeep, and then GM refined it with a balance shaft and even firing. **In the turbocharged 1987 Buick GNX, it made 300 horsepower.** As the 3800, it powered everything from Chevys to Cadillacs and sold more than 25 million copies. Race versions landed four Indy 500 poles. Its final assignment was in the 2009 Buick LaCrosse.



Block Party

CREATING A V-6 BY DECLARING TWO CYLINDERS REDUNDANT. *by Don Sherman*

MANKIND'S ABILITY TO make things, sometimes out of practically nothing, is what distinguishes us from our knuckle-dragging ancestors. We can dig up ore, melt it, and ladle it into a mold, and out pops an engine block. Jaguar Land Rover's AJ126 engine is a more economical form of human ingenuity; it's a supercharged 3.0-liter V-6 made from the existing AJ133 5.0-liter V-8. Though this is not an original idea—see our sidebar, above, on Buick's Fireball V-6—the JLR gambit deserves the Queen's Medal for creativity.

Buick's V-6 was a hack job, a V-8 with two cylinders lopped off. JLR took a more direct path to save on design, engineering, tooling, and machining costs. It plopped a pair of three-cylinder heads atop the eight-cylinder block. That's daft from the bulk and mass perspectives, but the logic behind this twofer makes some sense. Sharing the exterior-block details enables one mounting system to serve both V-6 and V-8 engines. New partitions inside the die-cast aluminum V-6 block supplant the deleted cylinder bores.

A 60-degree bank angle is generally preferred for V-6s to minimize noise and vibration, but the AJ126's 90-degree design allows more space between cylinder heads for the supercharger and intercooler. To avoid odd firing intervals, JLR fitted a split-pin crankshaft. This splits adjoining connecting rods so that a cylinder fires every 120 degrees of crankshaft rotation, compared with the origi-



THE SPLIT CRANKPINS ARE HIGHLIGHTED HERE. ON A NORMAL CRANK, THOSE SURFACES ARE NEATLY ALIGNED.

nal Buick V-6's 90-degree, then 150-degree syncopation.

This V-6's five main bearings, versus the usual four, are bad for mass and friction but good for NVH. To assure that the AJ126 engine meets Jaguar Land Rover's compartment standards, there's a counter-rotating balance weight spinning at each end of the crankshaft.

Trimming the V-8's length wasn't crucial because all JLR cars and SUVs have engine compartments long enough to harbor inline-fours. But the evil side of having two cylinders on permanent vacation is the weight of the longer-than-necessary block, crank, and oil pan. JLR won't reveal exactly how much that is, but our educated guess is 50 pounds. That's got to be frustrating to the body and chassis engineers who sweat every ounce.

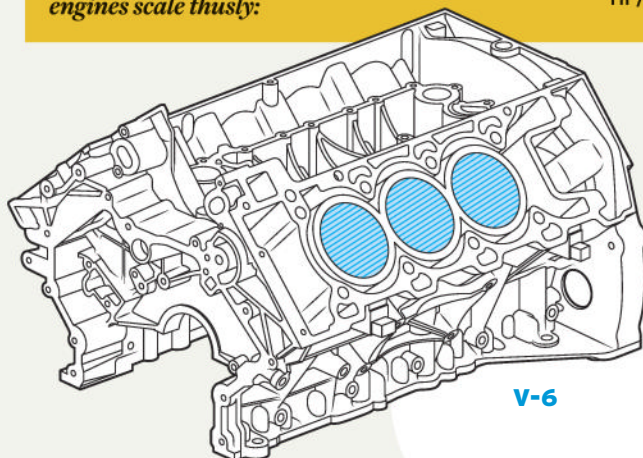
Customers have nothing to gripe about, though: This V-6 delivers exemplary power, poise, and performance. That said, the Jaguar F-type owner would be wise to take leave when the bar debate turns to engine design.

Thanks to automotive-assessment firm A2Mac1 for providing crank photography and reference for our block illustrations.

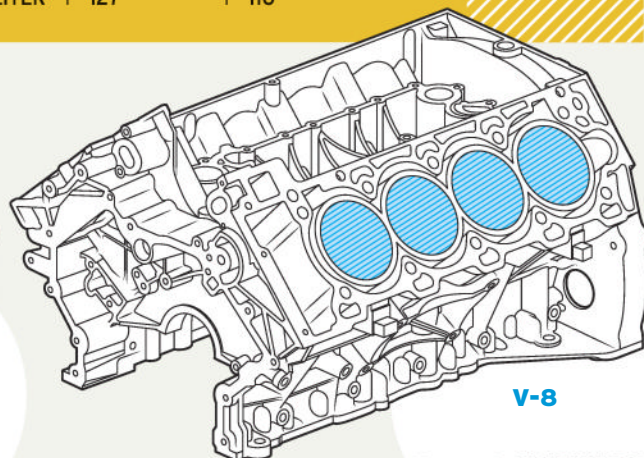
THE HOLE TRUTH

Jaguar Land Rover's AJ126 isn't just an eight with two dead holes, as its six cylinders have a smaller bore and stroke than the V-8. In their highest-output guises, the two engines scale thusly:

	V-6	V-8
BORE	84.5 mm	92.5 mm
STROKE	89.0 mm	93.0 mm
DISPLACEMENT	2995 cc	5000 cc
POWER	380 hp	550 hp
TORQUE	339 lb-ft	502 lb-ft
HP/LITER	127	110



V-6



V-8



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PROMOTION

TRASH vs. MAN

WHO WINS IN A FACE-OFF?

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Knowing each task has the potential to crack a trash container –or, worse, ruin the man who attempts such a feat – even the garbage industry is innovating to make face-offs a thing of the past. Gone are the days of, *“Will it or won't it hold up? Will he or won't he hold up?”* Now every lift, drag, or drop isn't a game of roulette.

Today you can spend half the energy you used to when taking out the trash. The key: venting channels. BRUTE's new container design creates air circulation that eliminates the vacuum effect, which occurs when lifting bags out of traditional containers. Plus, it reduces exertion on the handler through greater ergonomics. So your toughest job just got a whole lot easier.





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BUILT IN VENTING CHANNELS



CINCHES KEEP BAG FROM FALLING IN



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OVER 17 MILLION
SERVED

THIS GRAPH OF ANNUAL SALES SHOWS THE LONG, HARD CLIMB OUT OF 2009. ANALYSTS PREDICT THAT SALES WILL HOLD STRONG THROUGH 2018.

17,402,486

17,177,789

16,848,074

16,675,733

16,914,139

16,997,182

16,561,482

16,154,010

13,245,687

10,430,969

11,589,844

12,779,576

14,493,226

15,601,148

16,522,663

17,470,659

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

Spinning Records

2015 WAS THE U.S. CAR INDUSTRY'S BEST SALES YEAR EVER. HERE'S HOW IT HAPPENED. *by Benjamin Preston*

THE NUMBERS ARE IN AND IT'S OFFICIAL: 2015 was the auto industry's best year in history. Automakers sold 17,470,659 cars, light trucks, and SUVs in the U.S. last year, surpassing the record set in 2000 by more than 68,000 units. Between 2001 and 2007, sales had been on a gradual decline, and when the recession hit in 2008, they plunged into the abyss, hitting a low of 10.4 million units in 2009.

Analysts say a variety of factors have coaxed the sales bull out of hibernation. The most obvious one has been low fuel prices. Gasoline averaged \$2.52 per gallon in 2015 and is already lower this year. Sources such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank predict that the price of crude will stay low through the end of the decade (although a few angry men with Kalashnikovs can easily change that).

Another factor was pent-up demand from depressed sales in years past, says Matt DeLorenzo, managing editor for Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com. Fewer new cars eventually translates into fewer used cars, which drives up the prices of the latter. More-expensive used cars, in turn, make new cars more attractive. "There was also a huge uptick in leasing, which made it easier to get into a new car," he says.

Consumers who chose buying over leasing benefited from low interest rates. That, plus a low unemployment rate—the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says it fell to 5 percent in the last quarter of 2015—made people more likely to want to go out and buy cars, says Stephanie Brinley,

a senior analyst at IHS Automotive.

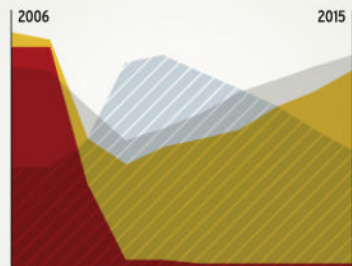
Even in a growth market, not all winners are created equal. Although truck sales rose a little above their pre-recession levels, the biggest explosion was in the crossover/SUV segment, which now accounts for 38 percent of sales in the U.S. But, as Brinley points out, all the economic green lights have increased consumer confidence, providing more action across the industry. "Luxury did really well this year," she said. "If we have money, we tend to spend it."

Who were the biggest winners? The three bestselling brands in the country—Ford, Chevrolet, and Toyota—all saw 4- to 5-percent increases in sales over 2014. Jeep had the biggest spike among domestic automakers, boosting sales by almost 25 percent. Subaru also realized a double-digit increase, moving more than half a million units.

With a 6-percent increase in sales on the books for 2015, IHS says things will likely slow a bit in 2016, down to around 2 percent. Growth will be slower, but automakers are more competitive than ever. And that is always good for consumers.

THE THREE WHYS, MAN

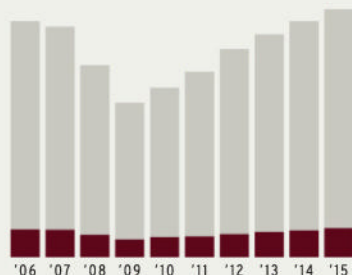
A complex web of factors influences car sales. Here's how three of the biggest—the unemployment rate, interest rate, and the Consumer Confidence Index—relate to the sales totals over the past 10 years:



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 2006: 4.6% 2015: 5.3%
INTEREST RATE 2006: 5.0% 2015: 0.1%
CCI 2006: 106 2015: 90
AUTO SALES 2006: 16.6 mil 2015: 17.5 mil

LOTS OF LUXURY

Not only was 2015 the best year for the auto market as a whole, but luxury automakers did better than ever before, too. A 0.5-percent gain since 2011 doesn't sound like much, but in terms of volume, it's more than 600,000 additional vehicles. Land Rover realized the strongest growth, increasing sales from 26,000 in 2011 to about 70,500 in 2015. IHS predicts that luxury sales will account for 13.5 percent of the market in 2020.



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Home of the Brave

ROAD ATLANTA IS NOT FOR BABIES. *by Csaba Csere*

track clinic

A RACETRACK CAN'T GET OFF TO A BETTER START than hosting a major international series as its inaugural event. That's exactly what Road Atlanta did with the seventh round of the Can-Am Championship on September 13, 1970. Road Atlanta hosted nine more Can-Am races before the series died, along with numerous Trans-Am, Formula 5000, IMSA Camel GT, NASCAR Busch Grand National, and ALMS events over the years. All were attracted by the bracing 12-turn, 2.5-mile circuit created by draping pavement over the undulating red-clay hills near Braselton, Georgia.

The challenge of coping with Road Atlanta's combination of blind corners, traction-trimming crests, and severe compression-inducing dips has also attracted countless club races through the years. Between 1970 and 1993, the track was the site of the annual SCCA runoffs twice as many times as any other venue, and Road Atlanta remains busy to this day, hosting everything from amateur motorcycle races to the Petit Le Mans.



History

Placing a road-racing track in the heart of stock-car country might seem like a dubious endeavor, but Road Atlanta caught a break when it was built in 1970. Another track scheduled to host a Can-Am race suffered flood damage, and the organizers chose Road Atlanta as the replacement. In order to be ready for the date, the track was excavated, graded, and paved in a mere six months.

While Road Atlanta enjoyed great success in the 1970s and '80s, it underwent several changes in ownership, which resulted in a paucity of investment. That resulted in bankruptcy in 1993, when it was owned by the infamous Whittington brothers, fixtures of the drug-fueled IMSA series of the 1980s. Enter Don Panoz, who purchased the track in 1996 and proceeded to upgrade it with wider pavement, an infield tunnel, concrete barriers, gravel traps, and a second pit row on the infield side of the front straight, plus garage space in the old paddock area.



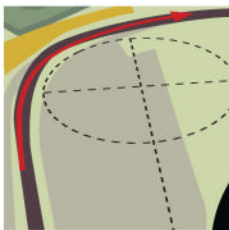
The most significant change to the layout was the elimination of a huge dip just before the blind Turn 11 under the bridge. Entering this "gravity cavity" at high triple-digit speeds (nearly 200 mph for the early Can-Am cars) and then standing on the brakes after the compression was a test of both stopping power and driver fortitude. In its place is the Turn 10A and 10B complex, which reduces the speed under the bridge. The ensuing turn is now straighter than it was before.

In 2012, NASCAR purchased Road Atlanta, though the track continues to host bike and sports-car races.



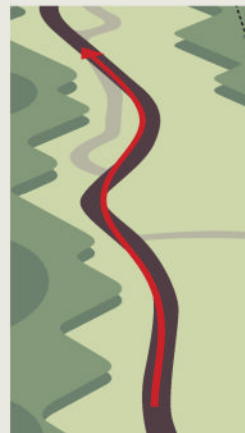
TURN 1

A fast right-hander, Turn 1 calls for moderate braking and turn-in near the end of the concrete wall on your left. The track bends slightly to the left just before the corner, so make sure you use all of it to maximize your radius. Don't track out all the way on exit, because you need to get back to the right side of the track before the blind Turn 2. It helps if you aim toward the prominent phone pole on the exit. As you head up the hill toward Turn 2, aim for the trees past the crest.



URNS 2, 3, AND 4

No braking is needed for Turn 2. Turn in so that when you reach the dashed line crossing the track, you drive over the second dash from the left. Apex about halfway along the curb and hug it until it ends, then turn immediately right toward 3. Apply mild braking, make sure that you're steering straight as you crest the hill, and employ as much of the curb as you can to help straighten the corner, even if it unsettles the car a bit. Apply some throttle to keep the rear of the car planted and use all the track on the exit. As you dive for the apex of the near-full-throttle Turn 4, touch the curb about halfway and follow it until it ends.



FASTEST LAP

1:06.242
STÉPHANE SARRAZIN,
PEUGEOT 908 HDi
FAP (ALMS),
OCTOBER 2008

**YOU'RE
LOOKING
BACKWARD OVER
10A AND B, UP
THE BACK
STRAIGHT.**

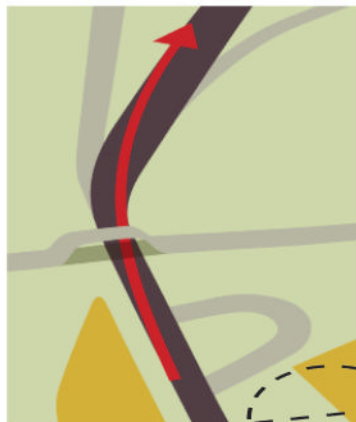
TURN 11, THE BRIDGE

As you approach the bridge, line up on the large, red rectangle in the middle of the overpass. This will point you toward the outside of the gently curving track as you come downhill toward Turn 12. If you do it right, the moderate steering input from your track-out point from 10B will carry you to the track out of Turn 11.



TURN 12

Most cars don't have to brake for Turn 12, but if you do, brake early and stay to the outside until the end of the curbing, where the hill ends and you can take advantage of compression by getting on the gas early. Stay off the outside curb, which is very rough and can upset the car. As you turn in to 12, your left tire should go over a cement patch near the base of the hill. Apex near the end of the curbing and track out near the start/finish line, using all of the pavement. If you drop a couple of wheels off on the left, don't sweat it. The grass is pretty smooth and you can ease back onto the track if you don't jerk the steering wheel.

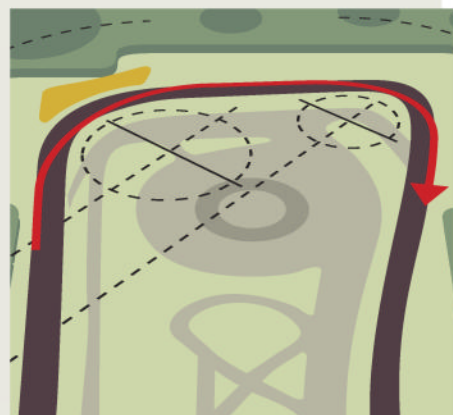
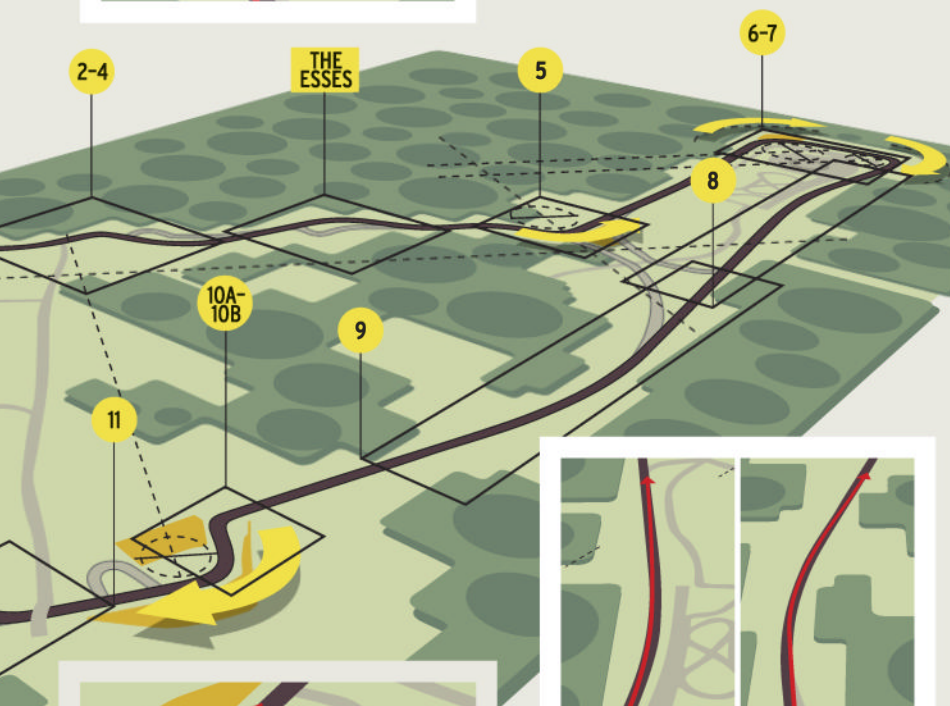


THE ESSES

As you exit Turn 4, stay toward the left side of the track until you are next to the rumble strip. From there you can see the apex to the first of the Esses, which bends right. Turn in gradually at the end of the outside curbing, ease off the throttle as you crest the hill, and when you reach the curbing on the right, apex late and do the same for the next three corners, which you can see clearly.

**TURN 5**

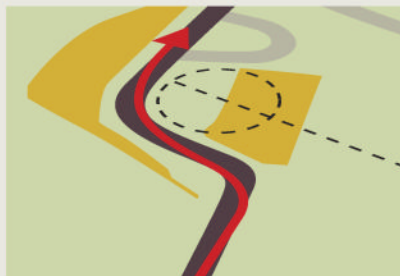
As you approach Turn 5 from the last of the Esses, brake moderately in the uphill section and apex a bit earlier than usual, because the rising track and slightly banked pavement provide additional grip. Look for the second corner station as your visual marker when you track out. There is a long straight leading to Turn 6, and you don't want to run out of track and have to back out of the throttle on the exit. To maximize your radius, you can use the wide, fairly smooth curb at the turn's exit. Once out of the corner, gradually move toward the left side of the track to set up for Turn 6.

**URNS 6 AND 7**

Brake late at the first dashed line across the track and trail the brakes into the cambered turn. Start to turn in as you cross the second dashed line. Apex in the middle of the inside curbing and immediately start looking ahead, just beyond the slight crest between Turns 6 and 7. Make sure you track out all the way for Turn 7. It comes up quickly and, at more than 90 degrees, is the slowest corner on this course. Stay close to the outside curbing, brake hard, and turn in just before it ends. Apex near the middle of the inside curbing and track out well before the end of the outside curbing. Use all the track to carry maximum speed as you exit onto the longest straight (0.8 mile) on the track.

**URNS 8 AND 9**

These two bends in the straight are flat-out. Stray from the traditional line as racing/dicing/blocking dictates.

**URNS 10A AND 10B**

The entry to 10A is downhill and the fastest part of the track. It's a prime passing zone, so superior threshold braking can pay off here big time. Brake very late and very heavily. Enter 10A on the right and don't turn in until you're nearly at the end of the outside curbing. Trail the brakes and get some inside tire on the rumble strip at the apex, but only track out to a bit left of the middle of the track, as 10B comes up very quickly. You don't want to brake into 10B. Instead use moderate throttle from the exit of 10A through 10B and turn in almost immediately for the latter, apexing about three-quarters of the way around the curbing. Track out near the end of the outside curbing as you climb the hill toward the bridge.

RACE-CAR ACROBATICS

Road Atlanta is famous for two notorious Porsche backflips some 20 years apart. The first one came in July 1972 during testing of the Porsche 917/10, the turbocharged Can-Am car. The rear bodywork came loose and the Porsche lifted off, tumbling many times as it destroyed itself, but driver Mark Donohue suffered only a broken leg. The second crash was at the 1998 Petit Le Mans when Yannick Dalmas performed a spectacular backflip in a 911 GT1, coming down almost on his wheels. Horning in on Porsche's acrobatic action was Bill Auberlen, who flipped his BMW V-12 LMR car at the track in 2000. The latter two exercises can be found on YouTube.



by John Phillips

IN DEFENSE OF NODOZ



It seems possible to me that you can test a man's enthusiasm for cars by counting the number of times he's slept in one. This notion occurred to me last October, as I dozed off in the bed of my Toyota Tundra in the uninhabited territory known as the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, from which, I must assume, at least Frank returned.

But forget camping. Usually, my nights in cars can be chalked up to poor planning or perfect planning played out in the infields of Watkins Glen, Daytona, or Road America. I'll bet I've spent 100 nights in cars. Racetrack designers copy the curves in my spine.

In 1993, with three other guys, I spent a month driving around Borneo in a diesel Land Rover Discovery. We slept in it several nights, and I recall using a bungee cord to lash my head to the roll cage to keep myself upright and forestall drooling. It was so hot that we left the Discovery's doors open, but that switched on the dome light. "No way to turn it off," declared driver Tim Hensley. That's when navigator Mike Hussey said, "I can turn it off," whereupon he punched the light so hard that lens and bulb glass sprayed over all four of us and left a convex dent in the roof. "And a fine good night to all," he said.

I was once asked to deliver a Porsche 944 Turbo from Seattle to Ann Arbor. On my first night, I tried to get a room in Whitefish, Montana, which amused the clerk as if she'd just been goosed. "It's peak season at GNP," she said, which wasn't a financial declaration but, instead, a reference to Glacier National Park. Exhausted, I drove another 100 miles east, then parked in a pitch-black lot overgrown with weeds. I slept until about 3 a.m., when what felt like an earthquake began to pummel my little piñata of a world, followed by the blast of an air horn that rocketed me upright and forward into a frozen L. I had parked nine feet from railroad tracks and awoke not looking healthy enough to be dead.

In 1992, I drove a Ferrari 512TR from Los Angeles to Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. On one long slog exiting Olney, Illinois—where I had inspected the town's



► **The Ferrari Inn & Suites: back pain guaranteed.**

population of superb albino squirrels—I became too drowsy to continue. At a rest stop, I nodded off in the passenger seat, and, for the second night, slept *in situ*. I won't say it was the most uncomfortable night of my life, but it recalled a moonless eve I spent thrashing in wet pine needles during an Outward Bound survival course in northern Ontario. On that night, I remember thinking, I wonder if I peed my pants if it would make any difference? Whereas, in the Ferrari, I tried not to think like that.

In 2006, during a comparison test through California's Mangel Pass, I spent eight hours in the back of a Nissan Xterra, sharing space with firewood we'd purchased earlier. In the morning, Aaron Robinson asked, "How'd it go?" and I told him, "Pretty good, considering I survived a night with a hundred emerald ass borers." Aaron said, "When you get Dutch elm disease, all your limbs will fall off."

In 1995, I drove CBS's Charles Kuralt's *On the Road* RV from Chicago to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. I slept in it one frigid night—so cold that at one point I crawled *under* the skinny foam couch cushion. And that's where I found a flight bag with a big yellow tag that read: "CBS News. URGENT. Hold at airport." It was signed by Kuralt and included his address in New York. When that info appeared in the story, Kuralt called to say, "Are any crazy car types gonna start banging' at my door?" Then I told him I'd slept in his famous bus, and he said: "That's insane. We *never* slept in it. We just drank in it."

I spent a month sleeping in a ratty Ford Fairmont—which is how they looked when new—while searching for an apartment in Toronto, this after my girlfriend felt confident she should live with a person whose name wasn't mine. And I spent a night in my Porsche 911 Targa in front of a Penske tire store just outside Detroit, waiting for it to open so I could replace a right-front Pirelli P6, which had earlier exploded with

force capable of rattling the American flag on the moon. Eventually, a cop drove up, saw my dog's head pop up, and figured a husky had been abandoned in a flawless silver Porsche, which tells us something about his brain. He called the Michigan Humane Society, so that when I woke up, *three* cops were aiming flashlights at me. Cop No. 1 said, "If you don't leave, I'm gonna arrest you and confiscate your dog." I was slated to move to the Detroit area a month later, so that

served as my Welcome Wagon.

After I got the new and expensive Pirellis on my Porsche, I had to immediately go back across the border into Canada. Can't remember why. But as I rolled up to customs, the guy asked if I had anything to declare, and I said, "Just this bottle of bourbon." And he replied, "Anything you want to say about your car's tires?" I got out to discover that each tire still had a big, white Pirelli sticker on the tread.

As I've said my entire life, don't ever sleep in your car. ■

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†† Government 5-Star Safety Ratings are part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's New Car Assessment Program at www.safercar.gov.

Try to avoid water higher than the bottom of the hubs and proceed slowly. Refer to your owner's manual for detailed information regarding driving through water.

by Aaron Robinson

ON THE PERILS OF THE PGC.



Recently I was chatting with George Peterson, president of the veteran market-research and consulting firm AutoPacific, about Nissan's strange year. It had a flirtation with sports-prototype racing, debuting the front-drive hybrid GT-R LM NISMO in a lavish Super Bowl ad but running just a single race before axing the whole program. Renault-Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn has pushed hard to grow U.S. market share from 8.5 percent to 10 percent by the end of 2017, but, as the trade paper *Automotive News* reported, dealers have complained that the goal is unrealistic and the company's stair-step incentive program pushes stores into selling cars at a loss. And Ghosn had to work hard to preserve the Renault-Nissan partnership after the French government moved to take more control of

Renault, in which it already had a 15-percent stake. No doubt, the proud Japanese are wary of taking orders from Paris as the partnership increasingly looks like a one-blade propeller, with Nissan and its profitable U.S. sales dwarfing the meager earnings from Renault's many low-margin markets.

Peterson agrees that Nissan, despite growing its U.S. sales by a healthy 7 percent in 2015, has had a few false starts. He figures that North America's heavy management churn, now somewhat settled, has been a factor. As we're winding down, Peterson mentions that there will be 357 named light-vehicle models for sale in the U.S. market by 2020. That's a lot of noise trying to find your ears. Peterson calls it the atomization of the car market. Coincidentally, 357 is only a little more than the number of musicians (342) in the University of Michigan marching band. Buying a new crossover is getting to be like picking out your favorite from Michigan's 68 trumpeters.

Standing out amid the clamor is not a new problem, but it is one of the growing imperatives as quality and safety become commodities and more models arrive, both from traditional brands and some new startups. I'm picking on Nissan, perhaps unfairly, because I think the company symbolizes an industry-wide identity



► Once the 4DSC; now just a pretty good car.

crisis at a time when identity is paramount to survival. What is Nissan? Is it the green-car company that launched the Leaf to great ballyhoo in 2011 but has yet to build on it? Is it the performance company that makes the aging 370Z and GT-R with no replacements in sight? Or is it the more sporty alternative to Toyota that gave us the wonderful 1989 Maxima 4DSC (four-door sports car) and 1991 Sentra SE-R, but is now just another purveyor of the PGC, the pretty-good car?

We find Nissans handsome and decent,

but a Nissan hasn't won a C/D comparison test since 2009.

Well, at least Nissan has rolled the dice, both on product and styling. However, proffering PGCs can be dangerous; look at what happened to Fiat Chrysler, which said recently that by 2018 it'll be out of the U.S. small- and mid-size-car businesses and will concentrate on more-profitable trucks. The Dodge Dart and Chrysler 200, the latter redesigned a year ago, have faded into background noise and aren't worth the engineering costs for replacements, apparently. Scion is another victim of PGC syndrome. Launched as a play for young buyers, it eventually became indefinable as anything other than incremental and costly-to-support volume for Toyota. Scion's seven model lines (none of which was a crossover in an era of growing truck sales) sold barely more than the Honda Fit did by itself last year. With nothing to root it to the market beyond the appeal of this week's deal, Scion died.

BMW and Mercedes have carpet-bombed the market with models, but also arguably diluted their brands. It's hard to see the coming three-row BMW X7 as anything other than a stultifying me-too move by a company that used to set the agenda in the sports-sedan market. Meanwhile, Hyundai is working hard to shed PGC status, launching a luxury channel aimed at the Germans, and, with Kia, making huge engineering leaps with each generation. But it remains difficult to define Kia, maker of both the Soul and the K900, as anything other than incremental volume for the group.

One reason Apple and Google are eyeing the car business is because they see it as ripe for disruption. For decades, the industry has engaged in redundant efforts to produce PGCs that are increasingly harder to distinguish. Yes, that's partly due to regulations and partly the funneling effect of mainstream consumer tastes, but also because the high cost of gambling on something different has made everyone risk-averse. The danger in being conservative and duplicative may become grossly apparent if the Apple car ever breaks cover. The company has billions to spend and a track record of blowing up convention, from the mouse to the Mac.

Overnight, the iCar may make the industry's dearly held orthodoxies look as obsolete as the Commodore 64. Apple has a strong identity; to survive, a car brand must have one, too. ■



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by Ezra Dyer

ALL THE RAGE.



I've been strangled through my driver's-side window. A friend of mine had a guy pull a hatchet on him. I've bent my own steering wheel. Cars incite passion, and passion's close cousin is rage. Driving can be joyful, yes. But it can also be so, so infuriating, to the point that—what? What? Oh, you give *me* the finger? I'll give you four fingers, shaped like a fist! And yes, Mr. Thumb is along for the ride, too. It's a one-way trip. Into your face! What was I talking about?

Oh yes, road rage. I'm a fairly even-tempered individual, but even I've been party to some highway hatred. Sometimes you have no choice. Like the incident with the racist Canadian. I was in Regina, Saskatchewan, deep into an ill-conceived story about driving across Canada. One of the support drivers

was an African guy, and that morning he'd double-parked while the rest of us glumly shuffled into a Tim Hortons. He was not in any way impeding traffic in Canada's 16th-largest city. So when the Honda Ridgeline pulled alongside and stopped, I figured maybe the driver was asking for directions. Nope. This guy wanted to rage.

His beef, ostensibly, was over the disruption of traffic, but really he just felt like starting his day with some racial invective. I was sitting in my car nearby, so I heard it all. I was already pretty salty about my own circumstances—later that day, I'd buy fireworks and light them off on the side of the road just to see something interesting—so I decided to introduce myself.

Now, if you're going to road-rage on someone, you need to evaluate your adversary. For instance, the guy who strangled me through the window weighed about 300 pounds, wore overalls, and was screaming things like, "I've had the cuffs on 30 times and I'll make it 31!" I'd rolled the window down to talk to him about the burnout I'd just done—the cause of his consternation—but he skipped talking and went straight to choking. So I hit the gas and confirmed that he couldn't run as fast as a Dodge Magnum SRT8.

But a guy wearing a tie and a Bluetooth headset and driving a unibody pickup

truck? He's probably never shanked anyone in prison. To complete the picture, he was also wearing one of those dress shirts that's striped but has a solid-white collar.

His face registered total surprise and confusion when I rapped on his window and went full ham. I'm not sure what I said, but the transcript went something like, "You should get the frappé out of here, mega-funker, before I ARARAGHGHHH! [Crazy shouting.]" The Regina-cologist in the Ridgeline took off while I stood there feeling both proud and ashamed. Kids:

"I moved out of Boston eight years ago, and there are probably people who are still planning to slash my tires."

Don't do this. There's very little upside, while the downside can involve hatchets, insurance claims, and jail time.

Frankly, that situation took me out of my element, because most of my prior rage experiences were related to Boston parking. And Bostonians play a long game when it comes to parking-related aggression. I moved out of the city eight years ago, and there are probably people who are still planning to slash my tires.

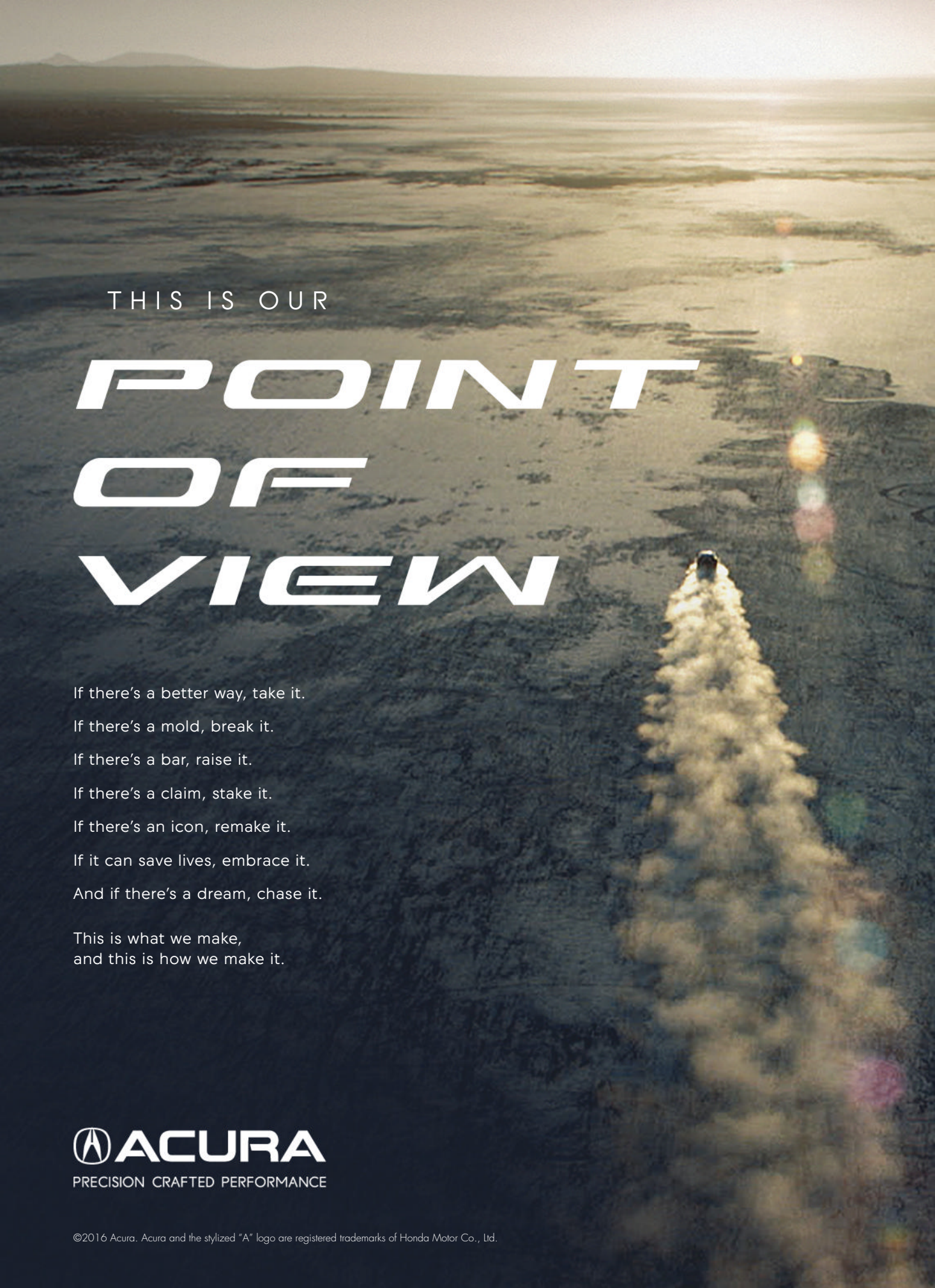
In Southie, I once witnessed a guy with a BMW park in a space that someone else had shoveled out and marked with a traffic cone—a practice known as "coning" that is officially tolerated for 48 hours after a storm (and unofficially practiced until about Memorial Day). The spot-shoveler promptly ambled out of his triple-decker looking none too happy. I asked him what he meant to do about this violation, and he replied: "I'm not gonna get him now. But I'll get him later." Envision this statement uttered under a leaden sky, with brooding music, and I think we're halfway to a trailer for *The Departed 2: Street Justice*.

The Northeast is a unique crucible for road rage because there are so many factors conspiring to amp up the aggravation: traffic, weather, parking, the general aggressiveness of the populace. A friend of mine in New York once got in an accident when he intentionally merged into the guy next to him because neither of them would yield. "It was the most avoidable accident ever," he said. "We drove into each other at one mile per hour while making eye contact."

Still, confrontations can happen anywhere. A few years ago, my brother and I were in the car with my father-in-law in a polite North Carolina town when, all of a sudden, Dad was out of the car and arguing with a guy who'd given him the finger. We let them go at it for a little while before I said, "Well, I guess we should get out." We never said a word, but as the guy got back

in his car he pointed at us and said, "Yeah, you're real tough with your little *girls* there." This was so absurd that I started laughing. Yeah, well, you have stinky armpits! And also maybe a lengthy criminal record, so really, let's get back in our cars.

Better yet, don't get out in the first place. Don't engage. The next time someone cuts you off, or tailgates, or takes the last spot at Panera, just keep driving. Even if it's your fault—maybe especially if it's your fault. Like I always say, you don't get strangled till your window's down. ■



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POINT OF VIEW

If there's a better way, take it.

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The Focus RS Meets Its Rivals
for a Back-Road Rendezvous in Provence.

by Mike Duff

photography by Charlie Magee

Bulldogs





E

urope gave us the hot hatchback and so we wanted to return the favor, choosing the Continent for our first comparison of the eagerly awaited Ford Focus RS. We took a car from the media launch in Valencia, Spain, and headed over the border to France, enabling us to use both Michelin's test track at Salon-de-Provence and some of the region's more spectacular mountain roads. This is where we find out if this four-wheel-drive superhero can possibly live up to the hype that's been heaped on its bulging shoulders.

This is also a welcome chance to confirm many of the stereotypes we hold so dear about France and the French, none of which is truer than the national characteristic for double standards. This is the European country that whines loudest about American cultural imperialism, yet every McDonald's franchise here is packed six deep. And during our visit, it was reported that the former French government minister responsible for fighting tax evasion had just gone on trial for tax evasion. Yet perhaps the greatest proof of Gallic hypocrisy came in the warmth of the welcome we received, and the polite interest that the natives, most of whom drive underpowered diesels, expressed in our relatively exotic trio. What has happened to France's fabled snobbishness?

On paper, the RS arrives with a clear advantage. Its 2.3-liter engine, based on the one in the Mustang EcoBoost, is tuned to deliver 350 horsepower. It sends this effort roadward through a transmission system smart enough to have earned its own doctorate, with separate electronically controlled clutches distributing torque to each rear wheel. At \$36,605 before options, it's more than twice the price of a basic Focus S sedan. And although standard equipment includes a touchscreen interface, Recaro sport seats, and keyless entry, there's still plenty of potential to add to that. Our car emerged from the calculator at \$40,085 as tested.

Ridiculous, maybe, but that's what you have to spend in this segment. The Volkswagen Golf R costs an almost identical \$36,470 in base four-door manual form, and \$40,010 with options. With a 292-hp version of Volkswagen's 2.0-liter turbocharged four, it's down on power compared with the RS and has a less advanced Haldex four-wheel-drive system that can't match the Ford's clever torque biasing. The R is the only car here available with an automatic option—Volkswagen's familiar six-speed dual-clutch DSG—but resisting it, as we would urge you to, saves \$1100 and 80 pounds.



Finally, an outlier: the Subaru WRX STI, distinguished from the others by the fact that it's a sedan rather than a hatchback, and because Subaru has somehow managed to supply us with a U.S.-spec car on Illinois dealer tags. With no front license plate of any kind, it should make any encounter with *les gendarmes* interesting. The WRX shares the same mechanical layout that Subaru has championed for decades, as if it were presented to them by the Almighty on carved tablets. A turbo-charged flat-four supplies power to all corners through a center differential with front-to-rear adjustable torque bias on the STI, and with limited-slip diffs at each end. For \$35,490 to start, it's slightly cheaper than the others, but a comprehensive options workout makes it the priciest car here when sampled, as they say in France, *à la carte*.

3. SUBARU WRX STI

You're more likely to meet a French vegetarian than a European Subaru. Last year, the brand sold just 41,000 cars across the entire

SUBARU WRX STI

- + Very nearly as quick as the Focus.
- Expensive in this company, a face that only a farsighted mother could love.
- = Maybe it's time for Subaru to revisit the formula it's been using for 20 years.

of conducting this test in what is very much rally country, with one of our chosen roads, the spectacular *route des gorges de la Nesque* and its vertiginous drops, frequently serving as a special stage.

Yet the Subaru proved to have no advantage on what should be its favored terrain, feeling very much like the odd one out in this company, and not just because of its three-box design. To be honest, it felt outmatched by these polished hatches. It's a point brutally made by poor road surfaces. Following the STI in the Golf R reproduced the odd sensation of experiencing the Subaru's crashy

continent, fewer than it moves in a typical month on the American side of the Atlantic. Strange, then, that the STI seemed to be recognized pretty much everywhere we took it. One middle-aged lady working in a gas station successfully identified it after hearing no more than its flat-four burble: "C'est un Subaru?" A function, we presume,



← It's loud and rough and generally uncouth, but the STI is basically just as quick as the more powerful Ford Focus RS.

ride by proxy, wincing in sympathy as it rode over crested surfaces with all the composure of a French military retreat. The Golf would read that same road as smooth just a couple of seconds later.

Subaru has stuck to a formula that has served it well; if you've driven one of the company's turbocharged products in the last 20 years, the STI feels instantly familiar. Worked hard, it is impressively quick, the 4.7-second zero-to-60-mph time just a tenth of a second behind the Focus RS. And the Subaru is faster to 100 mph and ties the Ford's 13.4-second quarter-mile time. But you have to dig for those numbers. At low revs, the engine is lethargic and there's a noticeable pause as boost builds—a lack of flexibility evinced by the difference between its zero-to-60-mph and 5-to-60-mph jaunts, which is double the differences of its rivals.

The rest of the driving experience is complementary, meaning somehow harder than it should be. Besides the punishing ride, there's also the handling. We've never noticed the STI understeering before, but against the Velcro Focus and the agile Golf, it felt distinctly front-end loose with no sense of power-on adjustability, even with the center differential instructed to send the majority of torque rearward. At the limit, the STI seemed to give up early, running surprisingly wide at lower speeds. You can travel quickly in the Subaru, but it's never a relaxing journey.

And just look at the thing. Subaru is long overdue for a handsome car, and the STI is not it. The body's lines and creases seem to

VEHICLE	FORD FOCUS RS	SUBARU WRX STI	VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R
BASE PRICE	\$36,605	\$35,490	\$36,470
PRICE AS TESTED	\$40,085	\$40,790	\$40,010
DIMENSIONS			
LENGTH	172.8 inches	180.9 inches	168.4 inches
WIDTH	71.8 inches	70.7 inches	70.8 inches
HEIGHT	58.0 inches	58.1 inches	56.5 inches
WHEELBASE	104.2 inches	104.3 inches	103.5 inches
FRONT TRACK	61.6 inches	60.2 inches	60.7 inches
REAR TRACK	60.6 inches	60.6 inches	59.7 inches
INTERIOR VOLUME	F: 53 cubic feet	F: 52 cubic feet	F: 51 cubic feet
	R: 38 cubic feet	R: 41 cubic feet	R: 42 cubic feet
CARGO	20 cubic feet	12 cubic feet	23 cubic feet
POWERTRAIN			
ENGINE	turbocharged DOHC 16-valve inline-4 138 cu in (2261 cc)	turbocharged DOHC 16-valve flat-4 150 cu in (2457 cc)	turbocharged DOHC 16-valve inline-4 121 cu in (1984 cc)
POWER HP @ RPM	350 @ 6000	305 @ 6000	292 @ 5400
TORQUE LB-FT @ RPM	350 @ 3200	290 @ 4000	280 @ 1800
REDLINE	6500 rpm	6700 rpm	6500 rpm
FUEL CUTOFF	6600 rpm	6700 rpm	6800 rpm
LB PER HP	9.9	11.3	11.3
DRIVELINE	6-speed manual	6-speed manual	6-speed manual
TRANSMISSION	all	all	all
DRIVEN WHEELS	1 3.23/5.9/39	1 3.64/5.3/35	1 3.36/5.2/36
GEAR RATIO:1/	2 1.95/9.6/64	2 2.24/8.5/57	2 2.09/8.5/58
MPH PER 1000 RPM/	3 1.32/14.0/93	3 1.52/12.5/84	3 1.48/11.9/81
MAX MPH	4 1.03/17.8/118	4 1.14/16.5/111	4 1.09/16.3/111
	5 1.13/23.0/152	5 0.97/19.5/129	5 1.10/20.7/137
	6 0.94/27.2/165	6 0.76/25.6/159	6 0.91/24.9/153
AXLE RATIO:1	4.06, 2.96*	3.90	4.24, 3.27*
CHASSIS			
SUSPENSION	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar
BRAKES	F: 13.8-inch vented disc R: 11.9-inch disc	F: 12.8-inch vented disc R: 12.4-inch vented disc	F: 13.4-inch vented disc R: 12.2-inch vented disc
STABILITY CONTROL	fully defeatable, competition mode, launch control	fully defeatable, competition mode	fully defeatable, competition mode
TIRES	Michelin Pilot Super Sport 235/35ZR-19 (91Y)	Dunlop Sport Maxx RT 235/40R-18 97W	Bridgestone Potenza RE050A 235/35R-19 91Y

C/D TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION			
0-30 MPH	1.5 sec	1.4 sec	1.5 sec
0-60 MPH	4.6 sec	4.7 sec	5.1 sec
0-100 MPH	12.2 sec	12.0 sec	11.8 sec
0-110 MPH	14.4 sec	16.0 sec	15.3 sec
1/4-MILE @ MPH	13.4 sec @ 105	13.4 sec @ 104	13.6 sec @ 105
ROLLING START, 5-60 MPH	5.7 sec	6.7 sec	6.1 sec
TOP GEAR, 30-50 MPH	7.6 sec	10.8 sec	7.3 sec
TOP GEAR, 50-70 MPH	6.0 sec	7.8 sec	5.9 sec
TOP SPEED	165 mph (gov. ltd, mfr's est)	159 mph (drag ltd)	153 mph (gov. ltd)
CHASSIS			
BRAKING, 70-0 MPH	158 feet	159 feet	156 feet
ROADHOLDING, 200-FT-DIA SKIDPAD	0.98 g	0.90 g	0.95 g
610-FT SLALOM	43.6 mph	42.4 mph	43.5 mph
WEIGHT			
CURB	3459 pounds	3456 pounds	3292 pounds
%FRONT/%REAR	59.4/40.6	58.4/41.6	58.8/41.2
FUEL			
TANK	13.9 gallons	15.9 gallons	14.5 gallons
RATING	93 octane	91 octane	91 octane
EPA CITY/HWY	20/29 mpg†	17/23 mpg	22/31 mpg
C/D 200-MILE TRIP	18 mpg	16 mpg	19 mpg
SOUND LEVEL			
IDLE	50 dBA	55 dBA	42 dBA
FULL THROTTLE	84 dBA	78 dBA	79 dBA
70-MPH CRUISE	72 dBA	73 dBA	71 dBA

tested by **ERIC TINGWALL** in Salon-de-Provence, France



*The first ratio is for gears 1-4, the second is for 5 and 6. †C/D est.

have been added almost at random, as if styling were coordinated via conference call on a bad line on a Friday before a holiday. The interior feels low-rent in this company, especially against the Golf, with cheap-feeling materials and mismatched fonts and varying brightness levels in the different display screens. Were it substantially cheaper than its rivals, we could forgive many of its foibles, but its optioned price is the highest here. Time has moved on; the STI has not.

2. VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R

Believe the hype, and the Focus RS—hallowed be its name—should have destroyed the Golf R the way a flamethrower destroys a snowball. But it didn't. Despite lacking 58 horsepower and a clever torque-splitting rear axle, the Volkswagen managed to run the Ford to a remarkably close finish on both the track and the road.

Acceleration numbers make the R the slowest car in this test, just above five seconds for the zero-to-60 sprint. But savings made on the other side of its power-to-weight ratio mean the difference feels less than the raw numbers suggest. At 3292 pounds, the Volkswagen is the lightest car here by 154 pounds; that difference is evident in the way the R stops, goes, and turns. It's also worth noting that in a previous test, the dual-clutch version was actually quicker than the numbers we just recorded for the STI and Focus.

In terms of outright grip, the R's peak 0.95 g was short of the Focus RS's, but the two cars produce nearly identical speeds in the slalom, a measure of both the R's agility and the confidence it instills in its driver. And on-road, the R delivers effortless pace. The engine responds with a linearity that puts a carpenter's ruler to shame, pulling strongly from where the Subaru is still gasping in a boostless hinterland and carrying on all the way to the fuel cutoff. The 2.0's flexibility means it feels at least as fast as the Focus at a real-world pace, heaving hard and not always needing a downshift to zing it into life. It doesn't sound as good as the others, despite a bass-heavy soundtrack in the cabin that is partially delivered by one of those cheating electronic sound devices.

Though its measured grip levels aren't as high as the RS's, they're still possibly too high. There's little sense of being able to influence the R's cornering attitude with the throttle pedal beyond reining it in when the front starts to run wide. It took the arrival of the sort of rain depicted in one of the gloomier Biblical passages to see the stability-control light illuminated. The R is quick and nimble, with the adaptive chassis



VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R

- Beautiful to gaze upon and sit in, effortlessly fast.
- Dynamically aloof: a hot date, but she's not really that into you.
- Makes you feel as if your social position is advancing.



➔ Sorry, fans of 1990s' car colors, the green paint seen here is not available on U.S.-market Golf Rs. Neither is the fabric upholstery.



THE HAUTE AND THE HATCH

France is the home of gastronomy, so while in Provence we sampled some of the local cuisine:

- **MCDONALD'S, SALON-DE-PROVENCE**
McDonald's corporate standards trump nationalistic fashion sense. Both the sommelier/cashier and the bustling maitre d' wear the team uniform: garish top, black pants a few inches too short, black shoes, white socks. The sommelier recommends the Coke Light, vintage unknown.

Fondue and mushrooms on the "American Winter" menu suggest a limited understanding of U.S. dining customs.

- **PRESTO PIZZA, SALON-DE-PROVENCE**
Recommended to us by the fact that it is open late. The proprietor resembles Tony Danza and has sired at least 50 percent of his staff. Language difficulties mean we aren't entirely sure what we order—*cheval* and *langue de boeuf* sounded particularly delicious.

- **BOULANGERIE, PATISserie BANETTE MAZAN, MAZAN**
France's restaurants are all *fermé* for Sunday lunch. The entire remaining stock of this

small bakery consists of a single sausage roll served *au froid avec hauteur*.

- **MCDONALD'S, SALON-DE-PROVENCE (AGAIN)**
Our fare the first time was suspiciously edible, so we returned unannounced. We try the *burger fromage pané et fondant* and the McWrap *fromage pané*. The former is a fried cheese log on a bun; the latter is a cheese log in a wrap. Not even French McDonald's does cheese logs to equal our gold standard, Sysco. Attempts to order a Royale with Cheese are met with blank stares, as is our inquiry, "English, motherfcker! Do you speak it?!" —MD





↑ The Focus RS's interior is no great shakes, and Drift Mode is a silly gimmick. But the RS is every bit as exhilarating to drive as we hoped it would be.



system on our test car delivering impressive compliance over broken surfaces in comfort mode and firming up noticeably in race mode. The control weights are less good, with the electrically assisted steering lacking resistance and the pedal and gearshift feeling too light in this company. Overall, this is an effortlessly cool high achiever, the sort that delivers without breaking a sweat. It's Jason Statham as a hatchback.

The Golf also scores highly on the want-it scale. It looks less aggressive than the RS, but its sculpted flanks and crisp lines gratify like good architecture. Inside, you'll find the best-looking and nicest-feeling cabin materials. Wolfsburg supplied this press demonstrator fully optioned, including various bits of carbon trim and a shade of paint that—in light of Dieselgate—we dubbed We're Trying Really Hard To Be Green. Despite near price parity with the STI and RS, both unadorned and as tested, the R feels like the classiest car here by a comfortable margin. For many, that will be the deciding factor.

1. FORD FOCUS RS

But not for us. Let's start with the criticism, which won't detain us for long. Until you start to drive the Focus RS hard, it doesn't

feel much different from the far-cheaper ST. Yes, its body kit is slightly chunkier, its air intakes are larger, and the rear wing is wingier. But apart from some blue-tinted instruments and overly affectionate sport seats, the cabin feels identical to that of its cut-price sister. And, indeed, identical to the \$18,000 base model, with grainy plastics and a dashboard layout that seems designed around a requirement to maximize button density per square inch.

Okay, that's it for the gripes. Start to drive the RS and complaints diminish to the scale of French deodorant sales. No, the engine isn't as linear as the Golf's (although top-gear acceleration times are very similar), but the Ford feels brawnier and more exciting, sounding nicer and delivering a fusillade of exhaust pops and bangs on the overrun. While the Focus didn't boast the test-track advantage its power output suggests it should have—we suspect the Subaru's rated horses are very muscular ones—it did record the fastest zero-to-60 time here, albeit by just a tenth of a second. And it remains hard to criticize a hatchback that can turn in a 13.4-second quarter-mile.

Dynamically, the RS is in a different league than the others, maybe even playing a different sport. It's far more exciting than the staid Golf and much more polished than

FORD FOCUS RS

- Composed, involving, fun; a completely new way of doing things quickly.
- The same cabin that feels cheap in an \$18K Focus is here.
- A new small champion is born.



★ FINAL RESULTS

045

RANK

1

2

3

Maximum points available

Volkswagen Golf R

Subaru WRX STI

VEHICLE

DRIVER COMFORT	10	8	9	6
ERGONOMICS	10	8	9	7
REAR-SEAT COMFORT	5	2	3	3
REAR-SEAT SPACE*	5	4	5	5
CARGO SPACE*	5	4	5	2
FEATURES/AMENITIES*	10	7	10	5
FIT AND FINISH	10	8	9	6
INTERIOR STYLING	10	8	8	6
EXTERIOR STYLING	10	9	8	7
REBATES/EXTRAS*	5	0	0	0
AS-TESTED PRICE*	20	20	20	20
SUBTOTAL	100	78	86	67

POWERTRAIN

1/4-MILE ACCELERATION*	20	20	19	20
FLEXIBILITY*	5	5	5	3
FUEL ECONOMY*	10	9	10	7
ENGINE NVH	10	9	7	7
TRANSMISSION	10	10	9	6
SUBTOTAL	55	53	50	43

CHASSIS

PERFORMANCE*	20	20	19	17
STEERING FEEL	10	9	7	8
BRAKE FEEL	10	8	7	8
HANDLING	10	10	8	7
RIDE	10	8	9	6
SUBTOTAL	60	55	50	46

EXPERIENCE

FUN TO DRIVE	25	25	21	20
GRAND TOTAL	240	211	207	176

*These objective scores are calculated from the vehicle's dimensions, capacities, rebates and extras, and/or test results.

Shell
V-Power
NITRO+
Premium Gasoline
The Official Fuel of
CAR AND DRIVER

the brutish STI. And this isn't just because of that trick rear axle; it's evident in practically every detail, from the crisp communication of the steering to the predictable weight of the gearshift to the resistance of the brake pedal.

The torque-shuffling back end builds on this. As we've said before, Drift Mode—the setting you select to make you Ken Block—remains little more than an amusing gimmick; it took us less than five minutes of on-track hooning to overheat a tire to disintegration, and, as an indication of where the powertrain sends most of its torque, it was the outside front that melted. (It took a guy six hours to reach us with a replacement tire; sorry, Ford.) The clutched rear axle is effectively a supplemental driving aid, one that works extremely well at eliminating understeer in real-world driving. Power into a turn and, as the front starts to run out of grip, torque heads to the outside-rear wheel to coax the RS back onto its

intended line. The result isn't smoking oversteer; rather, the sensation is of the RS being keener to turn as the powertrain works to maximize both grip and control but without permitting a serious slide. Proof of how good the system is comes from how little you notice its intervention beyond reduced steering effort on a twisty road, your right foot taking instinctive control of much of the directional input.

The Ford can be civilized, too, far more so than its wayward RS predecessors. It cruises quietly and comfortably, gets decent fuel economy, and is every bit as easy to operate as its more basic sisters. The firmer mode of the switchable dampers is too harsh for street use, but the standard setting has more than enough bandwidth to deal with anything short of track abuse. It's genuinely hard to find anything to dislike. No question, this has become the performance hatchback to beat. ■

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25 CARS WORTH WAITING FOR

Among the foundational differences between modern Homo sapiens and the less advantaged beasts of the world is the ability, however infrequently employed, to delay our gratification for the promise of something better. In exchange for not wielding sweet bone-crushing pincers, we can plan for the future in a way that lobsters find perplexing. This is why we don't just storm

the doctor's office for our drugs. No, we wait, mostly patiently, listening to Burt Bacharach and leafing through a copy of *Highlights* or a brochure for teeth whitening. Or we glare at DMV employees while shifting uncomfortably on rock-hard surplus schoolhouse chairs. And we hold on to our used-up or otherwise unsatisfying vehicles as carmakers trudge through the process of designing, engineering, testing, and producing the automobiles that hold enough promise to make another year in the Tercel worthwhile. What we have gathered here are promissory notes on the 25 cars that make extended stays in the vehicular waiting room bearable, arranged in order of desirability. Let the information we've gleaned from various inside sources set your expectations for future joy. For now, though, you still have some time to kill, so read at your own leisure. Your number will come up, eventually.





✕ Please enjoy
a lovely mint.

25 CARS
WORTH
WAITING
FOR



25. 2018 BMW X7

WHAT IT IS A big, family-hauling SUV with three rows of seating and room for seven. Basically, a Bavarian school bus.

WHY IT MATTERS BMW is late to the large-SUV game. Former CEO Norbert Reithofer spent huge sums developing the “i” subbrand. Now that he’s out, the company has decided that instead of changing the world, it just wants to haul its well-heeled kids to prep school, so the potentially very profitable X7 enjoys top priority within the company. Like the X5, the X7 will be assembled in South Carolina.

PLATFORM Built on BMW’s largest rear-wheel-drive platform but with available four-wheel drive, the X7 will have cutting-edge connectivity, driver-assistance, and infotainment systems. As to its off-road capabilities, this BMW is no Jeep, but that’s okay since its customers probably think of parking lots when they hear “off-road.”

POWERTRAIN BMW’s proven lineup of inline-six and V-8 gasoline and diesel engines will channel their torque to the drive wheels through a ZF eight-speed automatic.

COMPETITION Audi Q7, Cadillac Escalade, Infiniti QX80, Land Rover Range Rover Sport, Lincoln Navigator, Mercedes-Benz GLS-class, Thomas Built Buses Saf-T-Liner C2.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG The Ultimate Kinder-Carrying Machine just doesn’t work as a tagline.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Early 2018, at a considerable premium over the X5, so expect a starting price north of \$75,000.

X UPDATE

What’s become of our prior prognostications?

The Name Game

✖ The 2016 Ferrari FF coupe we predicted in 2014’s 25 Cars Worth Waiting For changed its name to GTC4Lusso.

And remained a shooting brake.

✖ The Alfa Romeo Spider we also wrote about in ‘14 became the Mazda MX-5 Miata-based Fiat 124 Spider.

✖ What we were calling the Lexus SC in 2015 has become the Lexus LC500 and LC500h.

2017 VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN

WHAT IT IS The long-overdue redesign of Volkswagen’s compact crossover, larger and less expensive than before but hopefully still every bit as good to drive.

WHY IT MATTERS The current Tiguan has been a laggard in a hot segment. Last year, VW sold just one example for every 10 Honda CR-Vs that found a home.

PLATFORM This is Volkswagen’s first application of the stout and versatile MQB architecture to a crossover in the U.S. Our Tiguan’s wheelbase will stretch 4.3 inches longer than the recently introduced European model’s to allow for an optional third row of seats.

POWERTRAIN VW will stay true to the original Tig with a 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder, an updated version of the EA888 in the GTI. Unfortunately, output is likely to be dialed back to around 185 horsepower in the interest of fuel economy. An eight-speed automatic transmission will pair with either front- or four-wheel drive.

COMPETITION Chevrolet Equinox, Ford Escape, GMC Terrain, Honda CR-V, Hyundai Tucson, Jeep Cherokee, Kia Sportage, Mazda CX-5, Mitsubishi Outlander, Nissan Rogue, Subaru Forester, Toyota RAV4 ... need we go on?

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG VW’s standing in the hot crossover market is all but nil. The new Tiguan must walk the fine line between being distinctly VW and acceptably mainstream to grow the model’s sales. The diesel version that Volkswagen hopes to sell here will face intense scrutiny from both the EPA and a disenchanted public.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Moving production from Germany to Mexico should bring the starting price below today’s \$25,755. The new Tiguan arrives at dealerships this fall.



✕ RED SPORT IS SPORTY, RED.



23. 2017 INFINITI Q60

WHAT IT IS A reboot of Infiniti's BMW 4-series fighter.

WHY IT MATTERS Infiniti's image got a boost a decade ago when the brand turned serious about challenging BMW with its G35 and the G37 successor. But then Nissan's luxury division got sidetracked with other vital projects, such as trademarking the letter Q. Now it's finally gotten around to replacing the G37 coupe, which survived for eight model years, its last two wearing the Q60 badge. If this new coupe can perform well enough to hang with the now-vulnerable 4-series—which is big, uninspiring, and a little cheap inside—Infiniti will bolster its enthusiast credibility once again.

PLATFORM The latest evolution of Nissan's Z-car platform underpins this coupe and the Q50 sedan, but the Q60 is about four inches shorter and two inches lower than the four-door. Like the sedan, the Q60 will be available with four-wheel drive.

POWERTRAIN Nissan has retired its long-serving, naturally aspirated VQ and brought in a new twin-turbo V-6. Pick your poison: 300 or 400 horses from three liters of displacement, routed through a seven-speed automatic. Entry-level models make do with a 208-hp Mercedes turbo four. The high-output version of the V-6 comes with Red Sport badges, the Infiniti equivalent of BMW's M Sport.

COMPETITION Audi A5, BMW 4-series, Cadillac ATS coupe, Chevrolet Camaro, Ford Mustang, Mercedes-Benz C-class coupe.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Infiniti's first generation of its steer-by-wire Direct Adaptive Steering (DAS) was about as direct as flying from Chicago to New York via Phoenix. Infiniti promises improvements with the optional DAS 2.0. Also, Infiniti now brings us Dynamic Digital Suspension, a set of continuously adjustable dampers with six modes. We're hoping the long wait for a G37 replacement allowed enough time that at least one of those modes makes the new car feel as good as the one it replaces.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Infiniti discontinued the old G37 version of the Q60 last year. The new Q60 will skip a model year, appearing this summer as a 2017. Expect pricing to include a slight premium but basically follow that of its sedan counterpart. That would put four-cylinder models around \$40,000, with top-of-the-line, 400-hp Red Sport cars pushing \$60,000.



22. 2018 FORD EXPEDITION/LINCOLN NAVIGATOR

WHAT IT IS A Ford F-series with a longer roof, three rows of seats, and a whiff of Queen Family Truckster.

WHY IT MATTERS People still buy personal-use minibuses and will continue to, even if gas rises back above \$3 a gallon.

PLATFORM Although body stamping likely will be different, the Expedition/Navigator will follow the same steel-frame, aluminum-body approach as the F-150. Aluminum saved several hundred pounds on the F-150; the SUVs will see a similarly significant mass savings. As with current versions, the new SUVs will surely ride on independent rear suspensions.

POWERTRAIN These body-on-frame twins will carry on with their current powertrain strategy of offering only twin-turbocharged EcoBoost V-6s. It's likely that the 2.7-liter will share the roster with the 3.5.

COMPETITION GM's Suburban-based Cadillac, Chevy, and GMC triplets outsell the Ford/Lincoln duo by more than four to one. And somehow the Infiniti QX80, the soon-to-be-replaced Nissan Armada, and the Toyota Sequoia all outsell the aged Navigator.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Americans could embrace "It's a Small World" as a transportation mantra; fuel prices may rocket up as quickly as they recently dropped; or aluminum could be linked to infertility. But none of that sounds terribly likely.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Late 2017 as a 2018 model, with prices mirroring today's: from about \$47,000 for a base Expedition to beyond \$80,000 for a loaded Navigator L.



25 CARS
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FOR



NEW LIFE FOR LINCOLN.
BY JARED GALL

21. 2017 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL

In our era of such cinematic gems as *Pride, Prejudice, and Zombies*, there's no such thing as letting dead icons sleep peacefully. Lincoln was looking pretty worm-eaten itself until recently, but there's fresh product in the showrooms and a new, 400-hp twin-turbo Continental coming. In this zombie counterattack, both pride and prejudice will be decisive factors.

The brand needs something dramatic to raise it from the ranks of the walking dead. Like all other Lincolns, the new Continental starts as a jazzed-up Ford, but one that is less obviously so than the rest of the lineup. Whereas the MKS it replaces atop Lincoln's hierarchy was built on Ford Taurus bones, the Continental rides on a stretched-and-widened Fusion architecture.



The seat bottoms have individually adjustable left- and right-side thigh supports—a boon for those with mismatched buttock sizes.

The 400-hp 3.0-liter twin-turbo V-6 is exclusive to Lincoln and available only with four-wheel drive. Were we in charge, it would be called the Continental GT, just to send the Brits into a tizzy. (After seeing the concept that became the production Continental, Bentley's chief designer, Luc Donckerwolke, asked David Woodhouse, Lincoln's head designer, via Facebook, "Do you want us to send the product tooling?") Lesser Continentals get two other engines,



the 2.7-liter turbo V-6—Lincoln is eschewing the “EcoBoost” name for its turbo powerplants—and Ford’s naturally aspirated 3.7-liter V-6. They are available with front- or four-wheel drive. All Continentals use a six-speed automatic transaxle.

It might replace the MKS at the top of Lincoln’s lineup, but the Continental is a much more fully realized luxury car. Its name and shape aren’t the only Bentleysque things about it; the Continental offers the full suite of today’s luxury equipment, including adaptive cruise, lane-keeping assist, a 360-degree camera, an automated-parking function, adjustable dampers, and heated, cooled, and massaging front and outboard rear seats. Reaching new heights in seat flexibility, the Continental’s optional front perches pack a record 30-way adjustments, including independently adjustable left- and right-thigh bolsters that allow for the most asymmetrical bottom cushion in a production car. What’s next on Lincoln’s to-do list? Prismatic cylinder bores? Lincoln claims that it selected its drilled-metal speaker grilles from more than 200 designs to optimize sound quality. And the door handles are integrated into the beltline trim.

In addition to the usual interior color choices, the top Continental trim, Black Label, is available in three different “themes,” or combinations of leather colors and accent finishes. Chalet is a wintry mix of white and various creams, Thoroughbred is a blend of tans and browns, and Rhapsody is a deep violet blue that, if this were 1976, would be rendered in velour.

Loaded with way more content and originality than the MKS, the Continental should start \$5000 or so higher than its predecessor, at around \$45,000, and easily soar past \$65,000 fully loaded. Yes, it looked much better as a concept car than it does as a production unit, but don’t they all? Expect to see it in showrooms toward the end of the year as a 2017 model.



25 CARS
WORTH
WAITING
FOR



20. 2018 AUDI SQ7 TDI

WHAT IT IS A high-performance trim level of the new Q7 SUV, because people who used to buy sports cars now want to sit five feet in the air while having their midlife crises. The SQ7 TDI won't be quite as powerful as the Mercedes-AMG and BMW M sport utes, but it will be less costly.

WHY IT MATTERS The performance-SUV segment might be absurd—no, it is definitely absurd—but it's also hugely profitable. Yay to profits.

PLATFORM The donor Q7 is the VW Group's first vehicle built on the modular-longitudinal MLB Evo platform, which will underpin the group's other large utes. Four-wheel drive and four-wheel steering will be standard.

POWERTRAIN Power comes from a 4.0-liter diesel V-8 that carries two conventional turbochargers as well as an electric-powered charger, the first in a production car. The engine produces 435 horsepower and 664 pound-feet of torque. It's bolted to an eight-speed automatic.

COMPETITION The V-8-powered BMW X5, Land Rover Range Rover Sport Supercharged, Mercedes-Benz GLS-class, a therapist.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Customers enamored with the hunchbacked BMW X6 and Mercedes-Benz GLE coupe might not like the comparatively dowdy SQ7 TDI.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Late 2017; priced above \$70K.



✕ DEPARTMENT OF WILD-ASS GUESSES.



19. 2020 APPLE iMAYBE

WHAT IT IS A whisper, a moon shadow, a feverish daydream, meditations in the key of A minor, and maybe a highly connected electric car from the world's most celebrated consumer-electronics company.

WHY IT MATTERS Google the word "apple" and a link to the fruit we've consumed for thousands of years doesn't appear until page four. That's how important Apple Inc. is. Still, to grow the company, Apple CEO Tim Cook has to explore new businesses. And vehicles, especially

automated ones, are a sturdy platform for mobile connectivity and the data harvesting that would ensue. Not much is known about this black-ops joint venture with BMW, which is being developed in deep secrecy, but we have this from an inside source: Apple is so rich that it's willing to spend a billion dollars on the project and then simply walk away if it sees no future.

PLATFORM Whether BMW is a partner or just a supplier, Apple would likely leverage the automaker's knowledge of composite structures, and the result could be a BMW i3-like city car of its own design to appeal to the scarf wearers who form the core of Apple's fan base. Trademark Apple cues could include textured metal surfaces and a completely fresh take on the driver interface, which will serve as a seamless gateway to the company's online universe.

POWERTRAIN If Apple's heavy recruitment of battery engineers is any indication, it will likely carry a battery-electric drivetrain. Automation will come when it's ready.

COMPETITION Given how folks form Soviet-era lines for new iPhones, any vehicle bearing an Apple logo should stake out a formidable sales position. This company got rich figuring out how to make big profits in formerly low-margin businesses, so all the automakers should be worried.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Apple has never collaborated with another company before, so it's an open question as to who will own the customer—and the accompanying data. And dealer-franchise laws, the millstone around Tesla's neck, make for a huge distribution quandary. Project leader Steve Zadesky, a former Ford engineer, is leaving Apple amid rumors that design chief Jonathan Ive is unhappy with the project. So that's not good.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Don't get in line before 2020, as nothing has been shown and no production site has been identified. Upscale features and new tech would likely drive the price well above \$30,000—much higher if you want it in 18-karat gold.

✕ UPDATE

Plug 'Em In
✕ Porsche's small sedan [April 2014] will be powered solely by batteries. There will be no gas- or diesel-engine versions.

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VOLVO ON A ROLL, HERRING OPTIONAL.
BY TONY QUIROGA

18. 2017 VOLVO S90

Since the breakup of Volvo and Ford in 2010, the Swedish brand has been designing and engineering a new lineup paid for by an \$11 billion investment by its owner, Chinese carmaker Geely. Volvo's solution to life without Ford is an all-Volvo-designed platform called SPA (scalable product architecture). Highly adaptable, the platform's only immovable dimension is the space between the front axle and the engine firewall, we're told. The wheelbase and the width can be pulled or pruned as necessary to work under a variety of cars and SUVs. SPA made its debut with the XC90 SUV; the S90 sedan and V90 wagon are next. We recently drove the new sedan in the Swedish hinterland.

Besides serving as the bones for a big SUV and sedan/wagon, the hardware will underpin the next S60 and XC60. One reason the platform is so flexible is that, from the S60 to the XC90, every SPA vehicle will have four-cylinder power. If you need more power than the 316-hp turbo- and supercharged four can provide, Volvo will sell you a plug-in-hybrid version whose electric motor boosts output.

In the S90, the SPA platform measures 115.8 inches in wheelbase, nearly two inches shorter than the XC90. The front and rear suspension hardware is shared with the XC90 but tuned for the sedan,

which Volvo says is 440 pounds lighter. Even if the claim proves true on our scales, Volvo will still end up with a 4300-pound sedan. Keeping the weight off is a major challenge when using flexible platforms intended for both SUVs and cars.

At least the S90 seemed solid as it busted through chunks of snow and ice during our sampling in this Nordic country. It's quiet, too. Though our T6 prototype wore studded winter tires, the car barely emitted a hum. The small, mighty engine and the eight-speed automatic come on strong and shove fast. In the 4706-pound XC90, we've managed a zero-to-60-mph run of 6.0 seconds; expect the S90 to dip into the mid-five-second range. The 400-hp plug-in-hybrid system of the T8 version will be even quicker.

Perhaps the most compelling part of the S90 is its clean and elegant design. Inside and out, the sedan looks expensive without any bit of flamboyance. But it's not boring, either. It's a lean car, with low, long, and wide proportions. Aston Martin's Lagonda Taraf [see page 094] might be prettier, but it costs \$1 million, and we haven't even talked about the better-looking Volvo wagon version, the V90.

And we haven't mentioned money because pricing hasn't been revealed yet. We'd guess that the 400-hp S90 T8 should eat up most of \$70,000; the 316-hp S90 T6 will begin in the mid-\$50,000 range; and the base model, the 250-hp S90 T5 with standard front-wheel drive, should cost nearly \$50,000. All three models go on sale this fall. The V90 will waltz into showrooms in 2017.



✕ NO SPLASH EDITION EXPECTED.



17. 2019 FORD RANGER

WHAT IT IS The return of the less-than-gigantic Ford pickup. Ford currently sells this mid-sizer just about everywhere except here. But that is about to change in response to the strong-selling Chevy Colorado and GMC Canyon. The Ranger will also spawn a new Ford Bronco SUV, which will offer some competition to the Jeep Wrangler. Broncos should arrive in 2020 with a starting price of \$30,000.

WHY IT MATTERS The sales potential is significant. Toyota has been quietly selling gobs of Tacomas—just shy of 180,000 in 2015. And GM sparked new life in the class, selling more than 100,000 Coloranyons last year. In its heyday, the Ranger shamed them all, selling nearly 350,000 in 1999.

PLATFORM Our Ranger will use the same body-on-frame construction as the truck sold elsewhere in the world. Like GM's mid-sizers, it's only slightly smaller than its big brother; the crew cab is actually longer than a base F-150. But GM has proved that even big small trucks can sell without cannibalizing sales from the full-size lineup.

POWERTRAIN The only engine currently offered in the global Ranger that would likely come to the American market is the 3.2-liter five-cylinder diesel. It's available in the full-size Transit van and could help the Ranger take away the title of "most efficient pickup" from the 31-highway-mpg diesel Colorado/Canyon twins. Expect an EcoBoost four-cylinder as well as a naturally aspirated gas V-6 in the U.S. lineup. A diesel Bronco sounds pretty good to us, too.

COMPETITION Chevy Colorado, GMC Canyon, Nissan Frontier, Toyota Tacoma.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG With the mid-size-truck market on the upswing and the Ranger nameplate's widespread recognition, the only way this could derail is if Ford executives charge too much.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE The 2019 model year, with base prices below \$25,000.



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16. 2018 AUDI A8

WHAT IT IS Audi's big sedan, internally called D5, rebooted to take on the Mercedes-Benz S-class and the new BMW 7-series.

WHY IT MATTERS After the launch of the latest and immensely successful Mercedes-Benz S-class and the thoroughly upgraded BMW 7-series, the A8 is showing its age. This will be the first Audi to launch with an entirely new user interface, previewed by the Prologue concept and the e-tron Quattro concept unveiled in Frankfurt last year.

PLATFORM When Wolfgang Dürheimer was chief of R&D at Audi, there was talk about using the Porsche Panamera's MSB rear-wheel-drive platform, but the A8 D5 will be built on an enlarged, four-wheel-drive, and primarily aluminum version of the modular-longitudinal MLB Evo architecture. Expect the new A8 to contain a plethora of minor electrical miracles, including novel safety features and self-driving capability.

POWERTRAIN In the rest of the world, the A8 will come powered by everything from a turbo four to an electric motor. Here in the States, we'll get a lineup similar to today's: a twin-turbo V-6, two versions of a turbocharged V-8, and a twin-turbocharged W-12. A diesel option might be available, emphasis on "might." And a fully electric A8 is a possibility in the coming years since the A8 shares its architecture with the all-electric next-gen VW Phaeton.

COMPETITION BMW 7-series, Cadillac CT8, Jaguar XJ, Lexus LS, Mercedes-Benz S-class, Tesla Model S, VW Phaeton.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Once the sportiest entry in the luxury segment, the A8 is losing its edge. The new model needs to push Audi design and big-car dynamics forward.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Global launch in early 2017, with a U.S.-market intro later that year as a 2018 model. It will remain in the \$80,000-to-\$130,000 range.



15. 2019 CADILLAC CT8

WHAT IT IS Cadillac's new flagship sedan. Even larger than the CT6, the CT8 will take on the establishment in the luxury-limo class and be the technology and styling leader for the brand.

WHY IT MATTERS Cadillac has to prove its status as a global competitor to the Germans, Jaguar, and Lexus, and the brand needs to demonstrate that it can command six-figure prices. Having a stylish and technologically advanced car in the S-class league might just do the trick.

PLATFORM Like the CT6, the CT8 is built on the Omega platform, designed for rear- and four-wheel-drive

applications. Thanks to a clever mix of aluminum and high-strength steels, it should undercut the competition by several hundred pounds.

POWERTRAIN Look for a twin-turbocharged V-6 and an all-new twin-turbocharged 4.2-liter V-8 with close to 500 horsepower. A plug-in hybrid will likely be offered as well.

COMPETITION Audi A8, BMW 7-series, Jaguar XJ, Lexus LS, Maserati Quattroporte, Mercedes-Benz S-class.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Cadillac is in flux and trying hard to elevate itself to global-luxury-brand status. The CT8 needs to be stunningly beautiful and strikingly free of cheapness; if it is a compromise, don't even bother.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Late 2018 or 2019, priced at more than \$90,000.

X LAWRENCE OF ARABIA DROVE AN ARMORED ROLLER.



14. 2019 ROLLS-ROYCE CULLINAN

WHAT IT IS The madness of the wealthy. When everybody else is getting drunk and jumping in the pool, you might as well hand Jeeves your tweed jacket and BVDs. The Bentley Bentayga has made Rolls-Royce's first SUV a certainty, with the company confirming that it is working on one under the code name Cullinan, dubbed, fittingly, for a famously gargantuan diamond of 3106.8 carats.

WHY IT MATTERS Millionaires, like everyone, are moving into SUVs. A Rolls-Royce 4x4 should sell strongly to this cash-rich cohort. Plus, if you go back far enough, you discover some of the earliest Rollers were used for some pretty adventurous escapades. Back in the days before roads.

PLATFORM The Cullinan will be based on Rolls-Royce's new aluminum-spaceframe architecture, being developed to help move the next generation of Rollers away from their engineering links with more-plebeian BMWs.

POWERTRAIN Rolls doesn't really "do" fewer than 12 cylinders, old boy, so it's as certain as the English cricket team suffering a mid-order batting collapse after tea is served that the Cullinan will have a V-12, most likely a development of the Ghost's twin-turbo 6.6-liter. A plug-in-hybrid version will also be offered.

COMPETITION Bentley Bentayga, Lamborghini Urus, Land Rover Range Rover Supercharged, Mercedes-AMG G65, Porsche Cayenne Turbo, Bell 206 Jet Ranger.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Tighter fuel-economy standards will make it harder to sell luxury pluto-utes, and if the global economy tanks, demand could disappear faster than a good valet.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE

Late 2018 and at possibly as much as the \$420,325 Phantom.

X UPDATE

Adios, Rampage

X What we touted as a Dodge Dakota pickup replacement in 2015 is more likely a Fiat trucklet under development for Mexico and South America. While it could eventually appear in Fiat or Ram dealerships, what's marketed as the Strada elsewhere would be an oddball here as long as gas is cheaper than bottled water.

13. 2017 MERCEDES-AMG GT R

WHAT IT IS A track-devouring version of the already ravenous AMG GT, with more power, a revamped chassis, and a wider body with unique front and rear treatments and a prominent rear wing.

WHY IT MATTERS In the mold of the previous gullwing SLS, which went through similar iterations, the AMG GT R will transform the GT from sporty grand tourer into a large and somewhat-heavy supercar. The GT R is the first of what's expected to be an almost annual series of special models over the GT's seven-year life span.

PLATFORM Like the base model, the GT R will be built on the aluminum platform that is an evolution of the SLS architecture.

POWERTRAIN The GT R will receive an upgraded version of Mercedes-AMG's twin-turbocharged 4.0-liter V-8 with around 550 horsepower. Future special editions likely will top 600 horsepower.

COMPETITION Acura NSX, Audi R8 V-10, Ferrari 488GTB, Lamborghini Huracán, McLaren 570S, Porsche 911 GT3 RS.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Nothing whatsoever. In fact, the only thing that could go wrong is AMG not doing these high-performance derivatives and letting its sporty cars go stale. But rest assured that something so tragic wouldn't happen. AMG can sell every GT R it cares to produce.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE The GT R will be unveiled early this summer; prices will approach \$200K.



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A TWIN-TURBO V-12
TAKES ASTON MARTIN TO 11.
BY MIKE DUFF



12. 2017 ASTON MARTIN DB11

The war is over and turbocharging won. Until recently, Aston Martin regarded natural aspiration as one of the brand's core values, the ripping soundtracks of its high-revving V-8 and V-12 engines presented as fundamental tenets of its faith. No longer. Within a few years, all of the company's sports cars will have turbos, with the new DB11 leading the way.

But it won't come bearing the Mercedes-AMG V-8 that Aston has the ability to use as part of its technical partnership with Daimler. That mill will power the replacement for the smaller Vantage. Instead, Aston has



gone to the considerable expense of developing a new twin-turbocharged V-12 displacing 5.2 liters and producing 600 horsepower and 516 pound-feet of torque. Fuel economy is said to improve dramatically thanks to both turbocharging and selective cylinder shutdown, and we're told the new engine will be tuned to deliver the least possible lag. But we'd be surprised if it sounded half as good as the sultry old 5.9-liter V-12.

Beyond turbocharging, the DB11 is reassuringly predictable. Aston is keen to emphasize that this car marks a clean break from the aged DB9 it replaces, with the two cars sharing no parts. While the components are all-new, the DB11 sticks to the modern Aston recipe with a bonded aluminum





The "AeroBlade" channels airflow from the rear quarter-windows and out a slot atop the trunklid, negating the need for a pop-up rear spoiler at speeds below 90 mph.

structure, aluminum exterior panels, and a design that pays reverence to its handsome forebears without turning obsequious. The standout "roof strake" is available in bright aluminum, body color, or black. The dimensions are very similar to the DB9's, and it will weigh almost exactly the same, but there is far more interior space and nearly usable rear seats.

Innovation is present—but well disguised. The DB11 gets a new multilink rear suspension and electrically assisted power steering, plus a clever "AeroBlade" system that channels airflow from the rear quarter-windows and out the top of the decklid to remove the need for a pop-up spoiler below roughly 90 mph. The biggest changes come courtesy of Daimler's electronic architecture, with a modern-looking display screen, TFT instruments, and the familiar Mercedes-style rotary controller and touchpad in the center of the cockpit. The closeness of the alliance is also evident in the DB11's single control stalk for the wipers and the turn signals, taken straight from the Benz parts bin.

Aston promises us that the DB11 will have a sub-four-second zero-to-60-mph time and a 200-mph top speed, and it will go on sale toward the end of this year. Pricing, including a gas-guzzler tax, starts just shy of \$215,000.



11. 2018 AUDI A6/A7

WHAT IT IS Audi's mid-size sedan and its low-slung brother. Both versions will draw from the design of the recent Prologue family of concept cars. They'll feature an entirely new user interface, similar to the one in the upcoming A8.

WHY IT MATTERS The A6 is essential to the brand's well-being, with higher profit margins than the similarly high-volume A3 and A4. Plus, the car has global appeal that stretches from Europe to the U.S. and China.

PLATFORM Like the 2018 A8, the next A6 and A7 models are based on Audi's modular-longitudinal MLB Evo architecture. This highly flexible platform allows for front- and four-wheel drive and will offer a bevy of telematics and assistance systems. And let's not forget the body variations, of which there will be four: sedan, long-wheelbase sedan for China, Avant wagon/Allroad (available outside the U.S.), and A7 hatchback.

POWERTRAIN The base A6 will get a 2.0-liter turbo four, with a turbocharged V-6 optional on the A6 and standard on the A7. The S6 and S7 get a twin-turbocharged V-6 with around 400 horsepower, while the RS6 and RS7, expected for late 2018 or 2019, keep the twin-turbocharged V-8. Down the road, there will be mild hybrids, a plug-in hybrid, and a diesel for the U.S.

COMPETITION BMW 5-series, Cadillac CTS, Jaguar XF, Lexus GS, Maserati Ghibli, Mercedes-Benz E-class.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Buyers in this (and every) segment are migrating to SUVs. The A6 needs to tempt people with its interior and exterior designs, high-quality materials, and performance.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Mid-2017 for the A7, fall 2017 for the A6; both will keep their current pricing position, beginning just below \$50,000 for the A6 and below \$70,000 for the better-equipped A7.

X UPDATE

Defending Our Life

✖ Land Rover's iconic Defender has died out, but a new Defender will be coming stateside. Land Rover is tight-lipped about the project, but we're told it won't look like the photo we ran with last year's list.



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2018 TESLA MODEL 3

10.

WHAT IT IS A relatively affordable electric car from a company that delivers the world's best and—until now—most-expensive electric cars and SUVs.

WHY IT MATTERS This mainstream model will tell us if those with middle-class incomes are ready to embrace an electric as their primary vehicle.

PLATFORM Tesla is very hush-hush about the details of this car. We expect a similar, if not simply scaled-down, version of the Model S's aluminum spaceframe, with the battery integrated with the floor. As with the S, Tesla will offer multiple battery-capacity and motor-power options.

POWERTRAIN The AC induction motor(s) will likely connect to a direct final drive, like the one in the Model S. Four-wheel drive, or "D" in Tesla speak, is undoubtedly in the works, but the base car might be front-drive. Because of the plug-and-play adaptability of the motors, a rear-drive sport model is a tantalizing possibility. Base models will have a range of 250 miles or thereabouts.

COMPETITION Chevrolet Bolt, Nissan Leaf, hydrocarbons.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG In a word: plenty. Between Model X delays, Gigafactory hiccups, the expense of engineering a new car, and defections of talent to other startups, Tesla has a lot on its plate for the next few years. Tesla is still a young automotive company, and if the 3 captures some Model S spirit, it has great potential.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE

Elon Musk tweeted that the 3 will start at \$35,000, though we expect most of them to come in right around \$50,000 once bigger batteries and other options add up. Deliveries are forecast for 2017, unless Tesla decides to follow its Model X pattern of needless complexity by putting an invisibility button and a time-travel device on it.



9. 2019 KIA GT

WHAT IT IS A serious four-door sports sedan from the people who bring you the hamster-piloted Soul.

WHY IT MATTERS This will be Kia's first credible attempt at reaching a buyer with sporting aspirations and a high-end ZIP code.

PLATFORM The GT, or whatever Kia ends up naming this sports sedan, will ride on a new rear-drive platform. Hyundai will also use this parts set for its own purposes, no doubt under its newly elevated Genesis subbrand, but the hardware will debut as a Kia.

POWERTRAIN Aiming directly at its BMW 3-series bogey, Kia will offer the GT in four- and six-cylinder variants. We expect that the sportiest model will be powered by a turbocharged 3.3-liter V-6 making roughly 340 horsepower. The entry-level sedan will pack a cranked-up version of the company's turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder. To bolster the car's sporting credibility, it will be offered with a manual transmission as well as the expected automatic.

COMPETITION Audi A4, BMW 3-series, Cadillac ATS, Infiniti Q50, Jaguar XE, Lexus IS, Mercedes-Benz C-class, Volvo S60, or used examples of those cars.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Against entrenched competition, it'd better be fabulous. And remember when Hyundai said the Veloster would be the reincarnation of the Honda CRX? Yeah, something like that could happen.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE The GT should arrive in 2018. As for price, take the stickers of the 3-series models, subtract the Kia discount, and you get about \$35,000 to \$43,000 in today's dollars.

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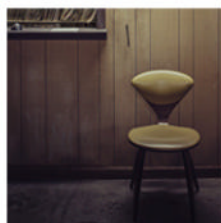
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TESLA HAS STUTTGART'S ATTENTION.
BY MIKE DUFF



8. 2020 PORSCHE EV SEDAN

The engineers in Weissach can take only some of the credit for Porsche's forthcoming EV; Palo Alto needs to be thanked as well. While luxury automakers officially like to pretend that Tesla exists in a parallel universe, the ability of this electric upstart to lure affluent buyers has been causing plenty of banged fists on German boardroom tables. Elon Musk should be flattered by Porsche's decision to go straight after his company's Model S.

The seriousness with which Porsche is taking this new endeavor is marked by the fact it has broken a long-held vow of silence about future model plans to confirm that, yes, it is indeed working on a production battery-electric sedan. And it is investing more than \$750 million on the development of electron-fueled models and the 1000 new workers to build them. That's a sizable stake to be putting on the table and clear evidence of Porsche's determination to win.

Not that we should expect the production car to be a license-plate-wearing facsimile of the Mission E concept (below) that introduced us to the idea at last year's Frankfurt show. That car had plenty of the usual show-stand tease, including that favorite concept-car cliché of suicide doors, plus controls that can react to facial expressions, and



Yay! A Porsche sedan that looks more like a four-door 918 than it does a Panamera! The 600-hp electric powertrain sounds good, too.



the promise of projected hologram interfaces. But Porsche is also intent on us knowing that the technology underpinning the Mission E is all viable, including high-output electric motors and the ultrafast charging system. It uses an 800-volt feed to juice the batteries back to 80 percent of the claimed 311-mile range in just 15 minutes.

The production Mission E will be built in Weissach on a dedicated line that's been dubbed Factory 4.0, meaning no direct link to any other Porsche. So it won't be a Panamera EV, although Panamera has a nice ring to it. The biggest risk here remains the rate of change in this segment. The headline spec for a 600-hp car that Porsche is aiming to introduce in four years—a 3.5-second zero-to-62-mph time—is already inferior to the performance of the latest Model S P90D that Tesla is selling now.

That's a lot of catching up to do.



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WAITING, THE HARDEST PART.
BY JEFF SABATINI

7. 2018 JAGUAR XE SVR

WHAT IT IS Proof that Jaguar wants us to love its sedans. The company is giving the recently launched XE to its new SVO tuning arm with instructions to turn out a proper performance derivative dubbed SVR, for So Very Randy. Or something.

WHY IT MATTERS Bragging rights. The venerable XJ is too old and staid to get a priapic SVR variant, but the XE and the closely related XF are prime candidates, especially given the plug-and-play nature of Jaguar Land Rover's powertrain modules. We think the XE SVR will come first.

PLATFORM The same mostly aluminum architecture that underpins both the XE and XF, as well as the F-Pace crossover. We've been told that all SVR derivatives will be four-wheel drive and lighter than the cars

they're based on, so expect aluminum body panels and maybe even a carbon-fiber roof.

POWERTRAIN JLR insiders have been happy to assure us that the company's 5.0-liter supercharged V-8 will indeed fit into the XE, and it makes far more sense to use it than to boost the smaller V-6's compressor to similar outputs. With about 480 horsepower, the XE SVR would have the firepower to take on the established German players.

COMPETITION Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio, BMW M3, Cadillac ATS-V, Mercedes-AMG C63.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Jag's ability to—as the Brits put it—ball things up might resurface. Previous R-S and R-S GT variants were too harsh and expensive, sacrificing the brand's trademark refinement for performance. The XE SVR will have to be both competitively priced and balanced enough to work.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Our bet is on a 2017 arrival and a price around \$65,000.

X UPDATE

Vette Dreaming
✕ The mid-engined C8 Corvette [May 2015] will arrive in 2018 as a full 2019 model-year replacement, without overlapping today's Stingray as previously expected. Thanks to shrewd use of light materials—aluminum in various forms, carbon fiber, fiberglass, and magnesium—what may be called the Zora will start at \$80,000 and ride the price escalator with added power and performance. A hybrid, which may be called the E-Ray, will join traditional V-8 powertrains.

6. 2017 PORSCHE 718 BOXSTER

Waiting to drive this new turbocharged version of Porsche's venerable Boxster is like waiting for the results of a biopsy. The doctor may very well find that whatever raised the alarm is benign, in which case you'll be happy, relieved, and maybe even resolved to get healthier. You know, eat more kale. The alternative... well, nobody wants to consider that.

For 2017, the Boxster (and its Cayman sibling) will sport a 718 prefix, a curious reference to a four-cylinder race car that's older than Porsche buyers' average age. The tenuous connection between the coming 718 and the 60-year-old one is a new flat-four engine—with 2.0 liters of displacement in the standard Boxster and 2.5 liters in the Boxster S. Turbocharging gives these two-thirds-size powerplants big output boosts compared with the naturally aspirated sixes they'll replace. The Boxster goes from 265 horses and 207 pound-feet of torque to 300 and 280, while the S will be rated at 350 horsepower and 309 pound-feet, gains of 35 and 43, respectively. The standard six-speed manual and seven-speed dual-clutch automatic stay put.

We are certainly not averse to more power, particularly for the base Boxster, which should be able to crack five seconds in a zero-to-60 sprint for the first time. And Porsche says an S with the PDK and the Sport Chrono package will do four flat. But let's not kid ourselves here: This engine downsizing is not motivated by track testing as much as worldwide fuel-economy regulations. Porsche cites a 14-percent improvement in fuel economy on the European cycle; U.S. numbers should arrive



closer to the 718's June on-sale date. Pass the leafy green stuff.

Porsche says curb weight goes up by 56 pounds on the Boxster and 78 on the S, with PDK models adding 66 pounds to the roughly 3000-pound starting weight. In part this is because of upgrades at the corners. The outgoing Boxster S's brake rotors will be standard on the 718 Boxster, 13.0 by 1.1 inches in the front and 11.8 by 0.8 inch in the rear. The S will get wider front rotors, at 1.3 inches thick. Rear-wheel width grows by a half-inch on both models, precipitating a retuned suspension and recalibrated steering. Add another pound or two for the NHTSA-mandated backup camera and parking sensors. And add \$3900 and \$4500 to the old sticker prices, while you're at it; Boxsters will start at \$57,050, the Boxster S at \$69,450.

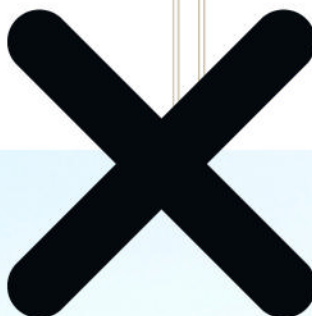
Porsche's new turbo engines may very well do no harm to its near-perfect sports car. They certainly didn't screw up the new 911.



We're not sure Porsche needed to add the 718 prefix to convince us that a four-cylinder Boxster could be appealing. As long as it still sounds as good as the old car, then we're cool.

We hope the powertrain-development team took inspiration from the styling department, which changed every body panel except for the trunk and hood, yet made the 718 Boxster look mostly the same as the outgoing model. But no surgery comes without risks; in this case we're particularly concerned about the Boxster's signature intake sound. It is as instrumental to the Boxster experience as Rob Halford was to

Judas Priest. Will that glorious ripping wail be swallowed by the turbo? Our breath is bated, nervously awaiting our first drive.



5.

2019 MAZDA RX-9

WHAT IT IS The revival of Mazda's Wankel-powered sports car, which refuses to die without a fight. It stole the 2015 Tokyo Motor Show in concept form as the RX-Vision, seen here.

WHY IT MATTERS The rotary engine is a cornerstone in the house of Mazda. Also, the MX-5 Miata could use a teammate to help zoom things up a bit.

PLATFORM Even though the concept's 106.3-inch wheelbase is substantially longer than the MX-5's, key body and chassis



X UPDATE

Deadwood

✕ The Nissan IDx [April 2014], the Scion FR-S competitor that captured our imagination at the Tokyo show in 2013, is now dead. Limited sales potential likely killed the project.

components could be shared, given the common front-engine, rear-drive layout. Mazda also has a wealth of Skyactiv components that could come in handy here.

POWERTRAIN Mazda acknowledges that 50 engineers have toiled eight years developing a new 16X two-rotor engine. Direct fuel injection, turbocharging, and a displacement 23 percent greater than the RX-8's 1.3-liter will help clear the hoped-for 400-hp hurdle. Switching from iron to aluminum for the end plates (analogous to portions of a piston engine's block) yields a significant mass savings.

COMPETITION Assuming that the car achieves its power and weight targets, the new RX-9 could compete favorably against the Alfa Romeo 4C, Chevrolet Corvette, Jaguar F-type, and Porsche Cayman.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG The rotary engine has a well-earned reputation for low thermal efficiency, which translates to poor fuel mileage. If Mazda fails to make major strides reducing gas (and oil) consumption, sports-car customers will be hesitant to embrace the RX-9 no matter what it brings to the speed-and-handling party.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Armed with the stunning show car's exterior, more than 400 horsepower, and a 9000-rpm wail, the RX-9 could be a disrupter in the \$50,000-and-up set. It's at least two years away, so don't expect it before the 2019 model year.



4. 2016 PORSCHE 911 R

WHAT IT IS A Porsche GT3/GT3 RS with a manual transmission and no garish aero addenda. What it really is: the answer to our sweatiest dreams.

WHY IT MATTERS Because dreams matter. And because in one of those dreams, our old friend, the Porsche 911, is not just an accomplished grand-touring car but still the heart of the brand's performance credibility.

PLATFORM The R is based on the so-called 991.1 version of the 911, not the updated-for-2017 991.2. That means the R won't have the new headlights, taillights, or infotainment system that came with the update, about which we care not even a little bit. What we do care about is that, since it's based the R on the outgoing 911 platform, Porsche will sell the car for only a year (and only 991 copies will ever be built). The suspension will be essentially the same as the GT3s', although, since the R is to be the street-focused version and because it won't have a big downforce-generating rear wing, it will be tuned a little softer than its track-rat brethren. Like on the RS, the R's front trunklid and front fenders are carbon fiber and its roof is magnesium. Hope you like silver or white because those are the only colors available. Buyers can opt for red or green over-the-top stripes to jazz up either paint color. In a nod to vintage-

At a claimed 3020 pounds, the 911 R is 111 pounds lighter than the track-beast GT3 RS, with which it shares an engine.



Porsche dorks, the interior will be offered with Pepita (read: a type of houndstooth) fabric inserts for the seats. Carbon-ceramic brake rotors will be standard on the two-seat R, but a stereo and air conditioning will be options.

POWERTRAIN The rear-drive-only R will be powered by the RS version of the 4.0-liter flat-six engine. That means 500 glorious, naturally aspirated horsepower at 8250 rpm and 338 pound-feet of torque at 6250 rpm. Unlike the PDK-only GT3/GT3 RS models, the R comes solely with a six-speed manual transmission. Why not the seven-speed manual that's available on lesser 911s? The R was deemed to be the wrong kind of car to pull a big overdrive gear.

COMPETITION Pfft!

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG What might go wrong already has gone wrong: The limited run and stratospheric price mean we'll never be able to afford one. Ever.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE The R will match the GT3 RS in power and slightly exceed its price, so you'll need at least \$185,950. That's steep. Of course, in 1973 each of the roughly 1500 911 2.7 RS models probably seemed expensive, too. Deliveries begin this summer.



25 CARS
WORTH
WAITING
FOR



3. 2018 JEEP WRANGLER

WHAT IT IS The 11th-generation descendant of the warrior that helped win freedom in World War II.

WHY IT MATTERS Jeep sold more than 200,000 Wranglers last year. It's a cash-spewing ATM that pays a lot of the company's bills. It's also the heart of the Jeep brand.

PLATFORM Jeep will continue with rugged body-on-frame construction to serve the off-roading aspirations of its faithful and multiplying constituents. That said, the coming edition will use modern materials to cut weight and boost mileage. Expect a hydroformed steel ladder frame carrying a body made of high-strength steel, aluminum, and plastic. A four-door pickup will join the lineup of two- and four-door models with hard- and softtops.

POWERTRAIN Today's 3.6-liter DOHC V-6 will soldier on with manual and automatic transmissions. Fiat Chrysler's current product plan includes a turbo-diesel alternative in the near term and a hybrid after 2020.

COMPETITION The Wrangler is without peer, a gully-busting rock climber you can drive to work. Compact crossovers bow in its presence. A new Land Rover Defender, expected next year, may re-invade this sphere, though at twice the price.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Failure is not an option. With Ferrari pawned off, Jeep is Fiat Chrysler's hero, the rare American brand with global admiration, solid profitability, huge sales potential, and a brilliant future.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE Late next year, with stickers starting around \$25,000.

X UPDATE

Bull Fight
✕ Lamborghini has pulled the plug on its plug-in-hybrid Asterion coupe. It's likely that some of the electric-motor and battery technology will make it into other Lambos.





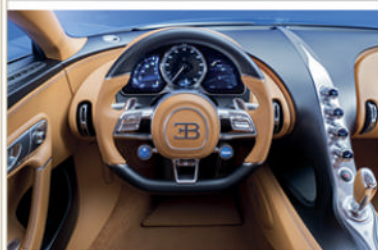
AGAIN WITH THE OVERKILL.
BY AARON ROBINSON

2. 2017 BUGATTI CHIRON

History has a lesson for those of you hoping that Bugatti's next move would be a full starboard tack to something different, such as the 16C Galibier supersedan concept from 2009. Instead we get the Chiron, which stops short of reinventing the stupefying 11-year-old Veyron coupe. Note that in its prewar glory days, Bugatti sold more than 700 Type 57s versus just six Type 41 Royales produced. The Madman of Molsheim, Ettore Bugatti, recognized that coupes called better than sedans to the sporting gentlemen who were his customers. Some things never change.

Thus, the 1500-hp Chiron, the planned 500 copies of which represent a sort of Veyron Type-C after the original 1001-hp Veyron 16.4 and the follow-up 1200-hp Veyron 16.4 Super Sport. Much has changed on the surface and underneath, but the essential mission has not: Use prodigious horsepower rendered by exotic technology and delivered by four-wheel drive to engender shock and awe in high-net-worth people, two at a time. Unlike recent Ferrari, McLaren, and Porsche hypercars, Bugatti's doesn't go in for any of that hybrid stuff. A battery? Sure, the Chiron has one. It starts the engine.

The basic footprint changes only incrementally. The wheelbase stays static at 106.7 inches and supports a beam widened by almost two inches. Overall length grows a bit more than three inches due to an elongated nose and a jutting lower lip in back. The octo-eyed



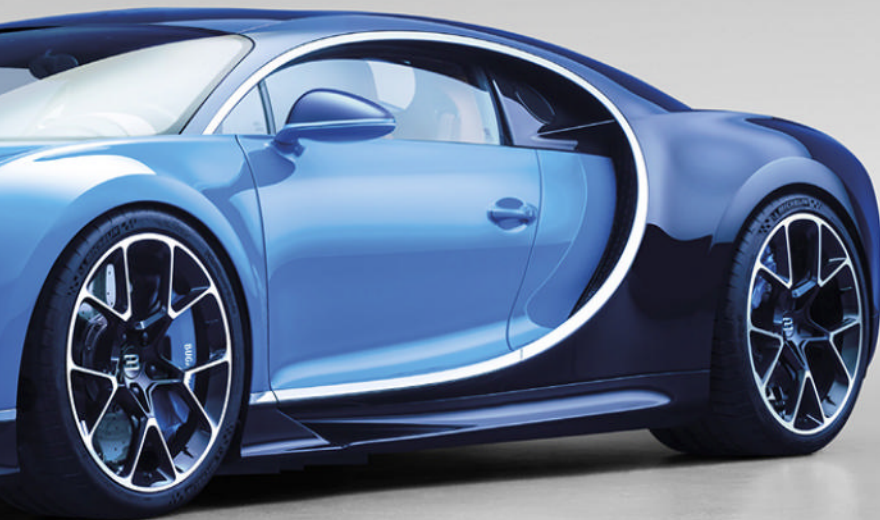
Spot the false statement: One of Chiron's airbags deploys through a carbon-fiber panel; its badge is solid silver; its steering wheel is from a VW GTI.

Chiron, with its stiffened all-carbon tub, new five-mode driving menu, and promised cheaper-to-replace Michelin tires (formerly \$42,000 per set), represents a clean-up of the Veyron's chubby shape. The old lower-side coves and twin roof bazookas have been melded into two giant C-shaped gills that dramatically frame the doors. In back, a boomerang-blade of taillights adds a more modern, robotic mien to a rear of wall-to-wall mesh that otherwise evokes an old Lola Le Mans car.

The quad-turbo 8.0-liter W-16 in back now gets lighter components, such as a carbon-fiber chain-case cover. Two-stage turbocharging, with larger turbos, eliminates lag. One pair does the pressurizing at lower revs for quicker spool-up, then the other two turbos come online at 3800 rpm for max boost. As with the Veyron, the Chiron is a superlative of numbers: an anticipated 2.5 seconds to 62 mph; a water pump that can circulate 211 gallons of coolant through the engine in one minute; six catalytic converters that have a total surface area equivalent to 43 football fields; a seven-speed dual-clutch auto that accepts the peak torque of 1180 pound-feet.

Restraint, what little there is, lies in the 261-mph speed limiter. The Veyron 16.4 Super Sport was limited to a grossly inadequate 258 mph.

Price: 2.4 million euros, or \$2,644,306 by the exchange rate as this is written. If the euro strengthens by a mere 1 percent, the price will go up more than \$26,000. But you're worth it.



25 CARS
WORTH
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1. 2017 CHEVROLET CAMARO ZL1



WHAT IT IS The Camaro that hopes to humiliate the Mustang GT350. The next ZL1 will have a big power increase and will get a version of the recently introduced 1LE's chassis.

WHY IT MATTERS Here's a Camaro with more horsepower and improved handling to body-slam a product from Ford. It's 19-freakin'-69 all over again.

PLATFORM As with lesser Camaros, the ZL1 will be built on the Alpha platform, the rear-drive hardware shared with the Cadillac ATS-V, among others. Stiff and light, Alpha should have no problem coping with more than 600 horsepower.

POWERTRAIN A supercharged 6.2-liter LT4 small-block with around 640 horsepower. Unlike the GT350, the ZL1 will offer an automatic option, GM's eight-speed. Of course, the six-speed manual is preferred.

COMPETITION BMW M4, Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat, Ford Mustang Shelby GT350/GT350R, a trip to the Barrett-Jackson auction to buy one of the 50-year-old originators of this feud.

WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG Nothing. Bring it.

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL AND PRICE The ZL1 will arrive later this year at a price north of \$60,000.



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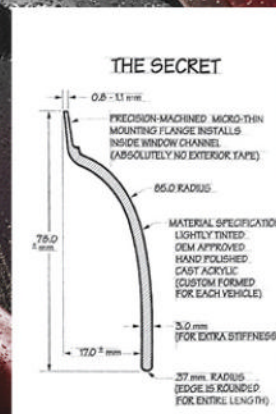
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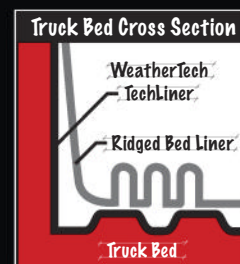
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FAST TIMES AT HIGH

Does driver education make
our roads safer? We go back to high
school to find out. by Jeff Sabatini

It's 2:55 p.m. on a Monday when I pull up in front of [redacted] high school for my first day of driver education. School has just let out, and hundreds of kids are racing to their cars. Nobody looks when they back out of their spots. Stop signs? What stop signs? While those at the head of the exit line inch along, glancing at their cellphones, drivers jam up both lanes of traffic trying to queue. Others beeline across the lot to the other exit, darting between unoccupied spaces, dodging kids still on foot. Making my way to visitor parking is like navigating rush hour in Rome.

The situation is frightening. But then I remember, this is what the whole world seems like when you are 15 and learning to drive.

The first time I took driver's ed was nearly 30 years ago, in an Oldsmobile powered by a Quad 4 engine. That's what I remember about my first go at the wheel—a light-blue Cutlass Calais.

I spot the All Star Driver Education car, a silver Ford Focus, and park next to it. This will be my office, the perch from which I will observe the many misfires between the 15-year-old brain and 3300 pounds of metal, glass, and plastic. I want to figure out how kids actually learn to do that thing that so much of society takes for granted. But it will be a week of textbook lessons before I get the chance to even ride along in the car.

Heading into the classroom, it all feels familiar. Pictures of dead presidents hang on the wall alongside student projects on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Except for their smartphones, even the kids look as we did in 1988: jeans, collegiate sweatshirts, Converse high-tops. Affordable clothes never go out of style.

Apparently neither does VHS. Over the next three weeks, mixed in among lectures based on our 235-page textbook and the All Star school's own self-produced training DVDs, we watch a collection of driver's-ed tapes from decades past. It's a far cry from *Lawrence of Arabia*,



but these kids eat it all up, even a series that Ford produced back when the original Taurus was new.

For the most part, the students are engaged. One kid can't stop raising his hand, eager to answer and elaborate on every question, even when his mouth is full of the popcorn and other snacks pulled from a small cooler near his desk. "Have you ever been in an accident?" he zings the instructor. Dee Braden, a retired physical-education teacher who spent 15 years teaching driver's ed in public schools, is as practiced as an Oscar nominee. She fires back with no shame: She was headed around a curve, it was slippery, she was going too fast... The story seems like a digression, but it segues nicely into the next sermon on the basic speed law.

Save for a few updates on subjects such as airbags and the distractions of cellphones, the lessons are boilerplate: Here's what a broken-yellow line means; here's how to navigate a four-way stop. I find out that I should be dropping my hands to nine and three o'clock, to keep from having my wrists broken by an airbag deployment. Braden tackles texting while driving right from the start, holding up her own phone and telling the kids she expects them to put theirs away in the classroom and especially while driving. One of the smart alecks shouts, "Dig the trenches now!" but most of the kids manage to survive the two hours of class each day without more than a glance at Snapchat or a quick round of World of Tanks (though there's a blitzkrieg during bathroom breaks). Their attention will pay off, as not one of the 12 students who have paid \$400 to take her class will fail the written exam.

And not a lesson goes by where Braden does not mention just how dangerous driving is.

I spend much of the lesson time thinking about my own ignominious experience learning to drive. More vivid than my memory of driver's-ed class is another landmark from that same summer: the first time I ever cracked 100 mph, as a front-seat passenger in an older friend's Volkswagen Golf. It was probably that eyedropper full of adrenaline that made me a car nut forever. And I recall the shame of practicing driving with my parents in our Ford Aerostar, learner's permit tucked in the back pocket of my Union-bays. When I ask my mom, Carol Sabatini, what she remembers about that time, she recalls going to get my license on my 16th birthday and then handing over the keys to her old Buick Regal. I was so nervous about my first solo drive that I brought the family dog along. Two months later, I totaled the Buick when I fishtailed on an icy road and lost control. Of course, she reminds me of that, too.

Fortunately, I walked away from the crash unhurt, and not for the first time. The year before, I was a back-seat passenger in a car full of teenagers when a 16-year-old I barely knew ran his mom's



Chrysler LeBaron head-on into a tree. Nobody was seriously injured, the driver escaping with only a broken collarbone. It was raining and he was speeding, showing off on a narrow, twisty road.

"That's what kids do," Carol says, "get their licenses and crash."

Mom is right, of course. Car accidents are still the leading cause of teen deaths. The fatal crash rate for 16- and 17-year-olds is twice that of older teens, and teen drivers have a crash rate three times higher than those aged 20 and older. Read through the volumes of research on teen driving and you'll see academics using the phrase "time to first crash," which is as morbid as it is fatalistic. There are many reasons why teens crash. An obvious lack of experience is the most significant, as is a tendency to speed and become distracted, especially by other teenagers in the car.

But something equally obvious, especially considering my own youthful crash history, still surprises me when I dig into the literature: Driver education does not work when it comes to preventing crashes.

The standard driver's-ed curriculum of 30 hours of classroom instruction paired with six hours of drive time became codified in the late 1940s, and this "legacy" format, as one researcher described it to me, is still widely used. All Star's curriculum is just a modern version. After completing such a course,

most teens can be expected to have proficiency in the operation of a motor vehicle and understand the rules of the road. And they will undoubtedly accomplish what Braden states quite clearly on the first day is the objective of her course: get a license. But they won't be safer drivers.

Until the early 1980s, this type of driver's ed was widely believed to be sound public policy. That began to change after the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration funded a study of more than 16,000 students in DeKalb County, Georgia, beginning in 1976. Millions of dollars were spent and a state-of-the-art driver's-ed curriculum was developed, but researchers found the revised instruction produced no reduction in teen crash rates. Although the DeKalb study was the highest-profile evaluation of driver's ed ever conducted, the results, published in 1983, echoed others.

"That pretty much knocked the wind out of the sails of proponents of driver education," says Dennis Thomas, a highway-

**"THAT'S WHAT
KIDS DO,"
MY MOM SAYS,
"GET THEIR
LICENSES AND
CRASH."**

safety researcher and the author of numerous NHTSA studies on the subject.

There have been studies since, but the overwhelming majority of the results concur with DeKalb. “Driver education by itself, while it may be the best way to learn to drive, doesn’t necessarily reduce crashes,” says Allan Williams, a leading driver-education researcher and the former chief scientist of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

As the first student fastens her seat-belt in the driver’s seat of the Focus, she seems to grow younger. Back in the classroom, this confident, well-spoken, and immaculately dressed 15-year-old—we’ll call her Jane—presented herself as a young woman and could have passed for a college student. Sitting behind the wheel of a car for the first time, she’s a little girl.

Her purple-painted fingertips seem tiny as she reaches for the shifter. “Do I need to pull it or press it?” she asks. Her first task is to drive around the perimeter of the school parking lot. Her eyes keep drifting down to the steering wheel, where her hands are all over the place, grabbing, tugging, sliding, crossing. Even with her head up and looking forward, she has blinders on and doesn’t look before she turns. Her throttle and brake inputs are jerky, and she gets scarily close to parked cars. I am glad mine is not in this part of the lot.

Next, she’s told to try reverse. Can she back into an empty parking spot? Yes, but at a rate of speed that’s much too fast. The instructor mashes the auxiliary brake pedal, but we still end up with the rear tires over the edge of the pavement and into the snowbank. If I were Braden, I would have called it quits right then, but instead, we head out onto the road—or, at least, partly onto the road, as Jane has two wheels on the shoulder, the same two that then run over the curb when she makes a right turn.

Thankfully, we have turned into a residential neighborhood and there is no other traffic as Jane drives down the left side of the street. The instructor grabs the wheel and steers her back to the right, exclaiming, “We’re driving in America!”

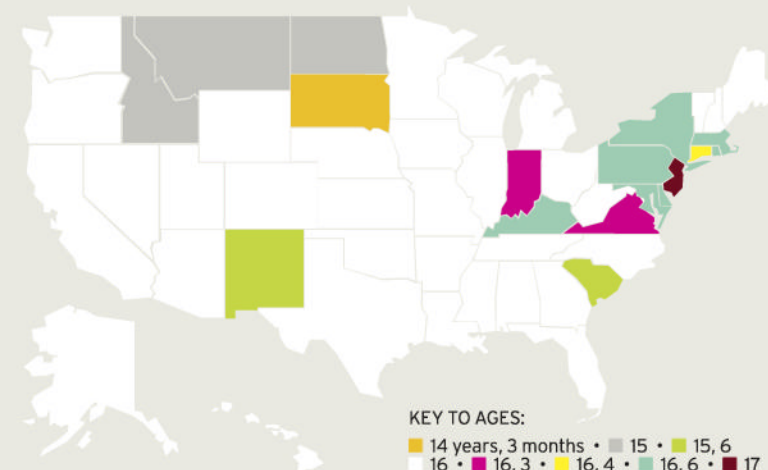
What happened after DeKalb is predictable. Support for teaching driver’s ed in American high schools began to erode. Faced with tighter budgets and increased state and federal education mandates, school districts saw it as unnecessary to their core mission. But driver education didn’t go away, it simply got privatized. Kids still needed to learn which pedal was the gas and which was the brake, so for-profit companies, All Star included, stepped in during the 1990s with replacement programs. My generation would be the last to receive free driving lessons from the football coach.

REMAINING TEENTATIVE

Graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws vary from state to state, but they all work in the same way—by managing the risks teen drivers face as they mature and gain driving experience. Thus, the most restrictive measures bring about the greatest reduction in crash rates, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. The greatest restriction is, of course, making teens wait longer to get licenses. Almost every state now requires at least some probationary driving period, ranging from three to twelve months. Some states also have raised their driving age. And there is evidence that GDL laws are having the unintended consequence of causing some teens to wait until they turn 18 to get licensed, when most states’ GDL provisions no longer apply.

The number of teens with drivers’ licenses is certainly declining. Among all 16-year-olds, only 25 percent were licensed in 2014, down from 46 percent in 1983, according to a report from the University of Michigan [see graph, page O86]. The most common reasons teens give for not getting a license are that they are too busy and are unable to afford a vehicle. —JS

• MINIMUM AGES FOR UNSUPERVISED DRIVING



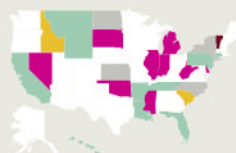
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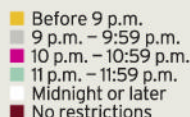
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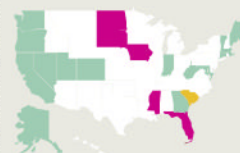
• NIGHTTIME DRIVING RESTRICTIONS



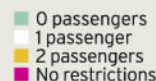
START TIMES:



• TEEN PASSENGER RESTRICTIONS



NUMBER ALLOWED:



Data from IIHS

My generation would also be the last to walk out of the DMV with an unrestricted license at 16. The other fallout from DeKalb was that state legislatures began to change licensing laws. Florida instituted the first graduated driver licensing (GDL) program in 1996, and over the next decade most states would follow suit. These new laws sought to do what driver’s ed alone had proved incapable of—reduce teen crash rates.

GDL laws created additional restrictions for younger drivers. Many states increased the length of time teens would have to drive with a learner’s permit and instituted requirements for a certain number of practice hours driving with a parent. Nighttime driving curfews and bans on driving with teen passengers curbed exposure to other dangerous situations. Today, every state has

instituted graduated-licensing requirements, though the restrictions vary from state to state.

The new laws are an effective Band-Aid, limiting teen driving in the riskiest of situations, which lowers crash rates. Some studies have shown declines of as much as 40 percent, though the lack of consistency in regulations from state to state has made it difficult for researchers to measure exactly which GDL provisions are the most beneficial. Mom would probably say “all of the above,” as my own crash history might have been forestalled had I come of age under tough GDL laws. “It’s safety versus mobility,” says Williams. “You’ve got to find the balance.”

After about 15 minutes of driving, Jane figures out how the car works, and she’s no longer running over curbs or driving in the oncoming lane. She nails a right turn and then completes a left-hander perfectly. You can feel her confidence building as she discovers she can turn off the seat heater that’s been on high the entire time. On the hot seat, indeed.

The next student driver to slip behind the wheel promises relief for my white knuckles. He professes to having lots of experience for a 15-year-old, practicing with his father. We’ll call this young man Dick. His confidence is outmatched only by his excitement, though his skills are still those of a beginner. His turns are too wide, he shuffles his hands on the wheel, and he doesn’t take that last look in the opposite direction any more than Jane does.

Out on the road, he has much better control of the car than she did; he clearly understands how to operate the gas, brakes, and steering wheel, but his movements are abrupt. It’s raining out and he is going too fast; Braden repeatedly tells him to slow down. He is cautious when traffic approaches, leaving adequate space between the Focus and other vehicles. “My mom is a tailgater,” he says. “I don’t want to be like my mom.”

Even though traffic is relatively light, his senses are overloaded. His eyes are darting back and forth, but just like Jane, he doesn’t know where to look and misses some things. He drifts in his lane, he stops too far into the intersection, he does not see a green left-turn arrow and brakes instead of turning. In truth, he is driving about as well as most people on the road, but most people aren’t trying this hard.

“Novice drivers are clueless, not careless,” says Donald L. Fisher, the director of the Arbella Insurance Human Performance Laboratory at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. “They lack skill at hazard anticipation.”

While graduated-licensing laws have proven, in true helicopter-parent fashion, to successfully keep millennials from suffering the worst of my generation’s stupidity, they still don’t address this issue. The hard-fought experience that kids need to develop to drive as safely as older drivers still bears an outsize risk. It is unclear what further steps can be taken to reduce it.

Some safety experts would like to see GDL provisions get even stricter, requiring longer periods of parent-supervised driving, even suggesting that parents be taught how to teach their kids, although there are serious questions about the feasibility of such measures. Expanding the scope of driver’s ed has its supporters, though data on the current crop of advanced car-control classes for teens show them to be ineffective. On the contrary, teens who take skidpad-style classes tend to have higher crash rates, a byproduct of showing off.

Fisher has a different idea, a new computer-based regimen that trains drivers to identify potential hazards in common road situations that he calls RAPT, for Risk Awareness and Perception Training. Students are asked to click on the areas of the screen where they think they should be looking, and the software corrects them if they pick the wrong ones. It’s deceptively simple, with the earliest versions of the material looking not dissimilar from the sorts of diagrams that driver-education instructors have been drawing on white boards since before they were white.

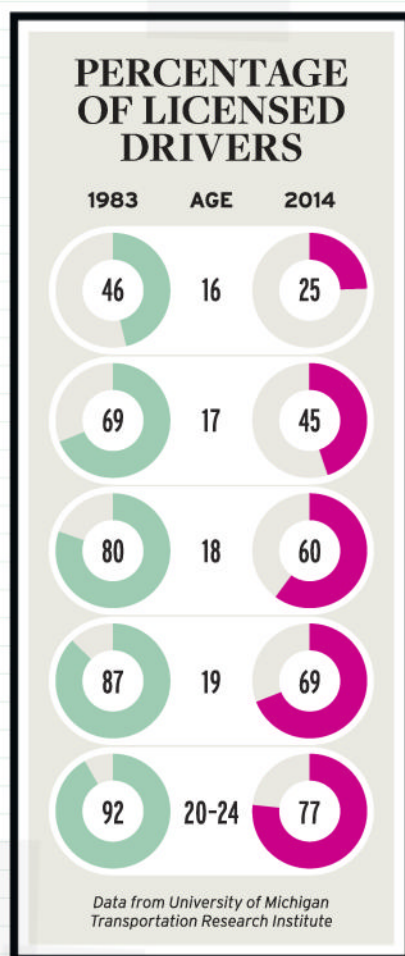
Flying in the face of prior studies and the doubts of researchers, including Fisher himself, the program seems to work. In January, NHTSA published the results of a study conducted with the California Department of Motor Vehicles to evaluate RAPT. After passing their driving test, new drivers were given about 20 minutes of the training. Crash rates for students who completed the program declined by as much as 24 percent in their first year of driving.

“I don’t think anyone, including myself, expected to find a crash reduction,” says Dennis Thomas, who worked on the study. “This is the kind of research that leads to more research.”

But these promising results come with one big caveat: The program only worked for boys. Girls saw no benefit. There is speculation that the gender bias might be

inherent to computer-based learning, as other research has shown that males benefit from this type of training more than females. When I suggest to Fisher that his training program might rely on the same sorts of skills used in the first-person-shooter video games that are immensely popular with males, he responds, “I’ve often said to myself, if kids were to take driving as seriously as video games, we’d reduce crashes to zero.”

Fisher tells me that well over 11,000 kids have completed RAPT training. It has also been used in programs like State Farm’s “Road Aware” campaign. After my experience seeing how kids cope with the stresses of learning to drive, I want to believe it can help bridge that gap between learning to operate a car and driving safely. Anything to make the high-school parking lot less of a scary place. ■



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2	98%	8.8	8.0	8.0	7.9	8.8	7.8	7.2	6.6	6.5	8.8	8.6	7.5	20,494,904
3	96%	8.9	7.5	7.6	8.0	8.3	8.1	8.8	7.8	6.3	7.0	6.9	8.3	228,680
4	88%	8.8	7.8	7.5	7.7	8.4	8.1	8.7	4.8	4.6	8.2	7.7	8.0	3,138,419
5	87%	4.7	7.2	7.2	7.1	8.0	7.2	6.3	6.4	5.0	7.1	6.6	6.8	4,176,057
6	87%	8.0	6.7	6.7	7.4	8.0	7.6	5.8	5.2	4.6	7.4	6.8	7.2	5,005,863
7	79%	4.5	8.8	8.6	7.2	7.7	7.4	5.5	4.8	4.8	7.4	6.8	5.5	16,982,250
8	78%	4.2	5.8	6.3	7.3	6.8	7.5	6.8	4.2	4.4	6.9	6.2	7.6	267,830
9	70%	4.2	5.8	5.9	6.2	7.0	6.3	4.8	3.8	3.9	6.6	6.3	5.8	6,164,106
10	70%	5.0	5.9	5.7	6.3	6.3	6.7	4.2	3.2	3.2	6.7	7.7	6.0	241,500
11	68%	4.8	6.7	5.9	6.1	6.1	6.2	4.8	3.7	3.6	5.3	4.2	3.6	454,560
12	64%	3.5	4.7	4.9	5.4	6.1	5.8	4.3	3.7	3.5	6.4	6.0	5.5	58,735,328
13	57%	4.2	6.0	6.2	5.7	6.7	6.1	3.3	2.5	2.5	5.1	4.6	4.0	3,993,196



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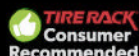
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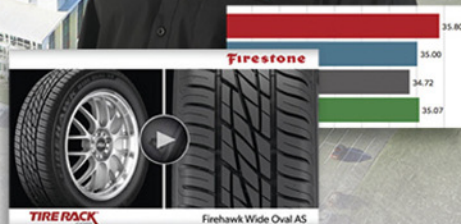


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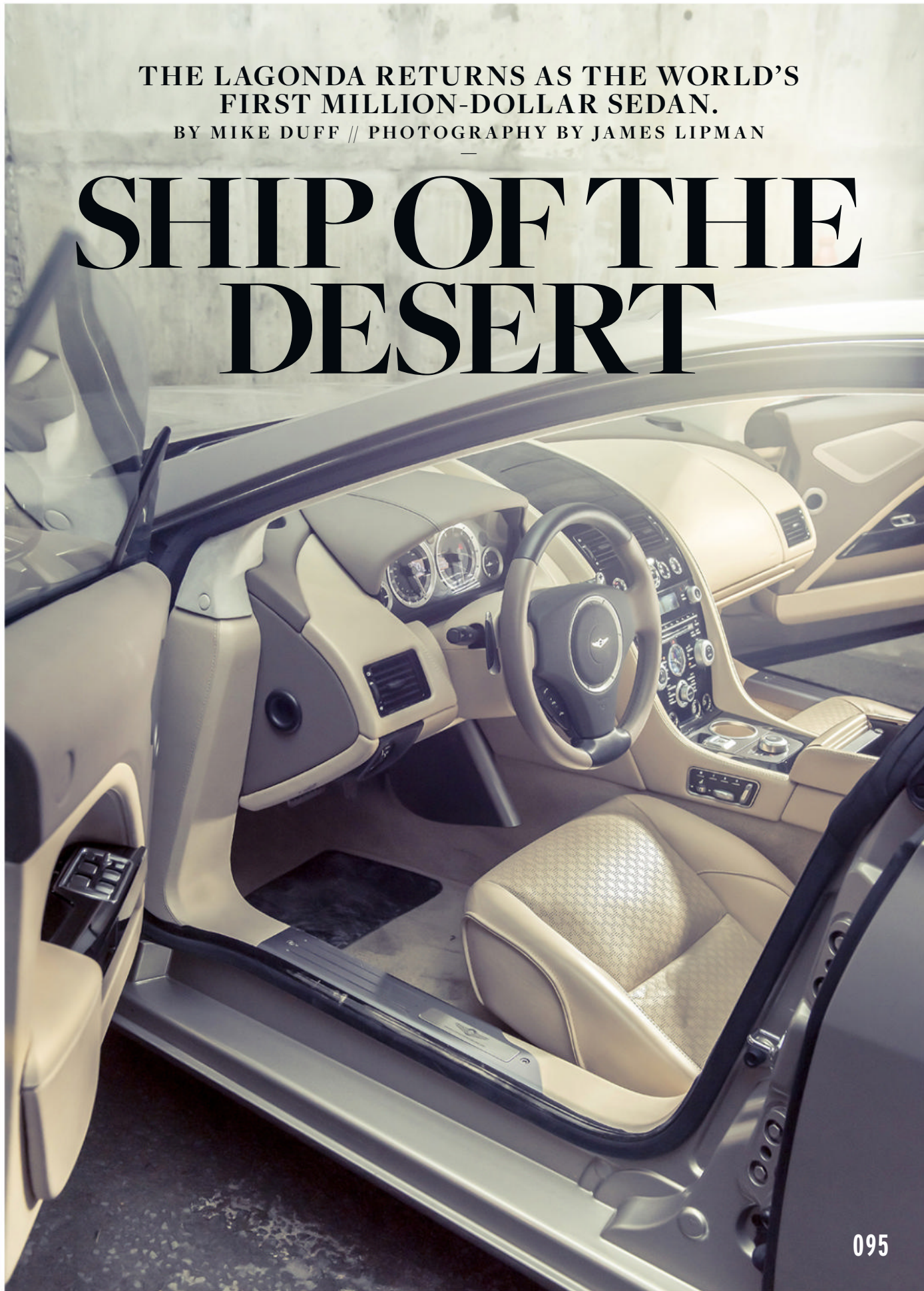
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SHIP OF THE DESERT



S

tatistically speaking, this is unlikely to be the car for you. Aston Martin admits that it's entirely possible it won't sell a single example of the Lagonda Taraf in the U.S., despite now offering it to a wider audience after initially restricting sales to the Middle East. Even a wave of interest from the nation's billionaires won't see more than a handful come stateside, as production has to stop by the end of this year. If you can afford the seven-figure price, or deal with the paperwork of personally importing it under federal show-and-display restrictions, you could end up with a true one-off. Or perhaps a three-off.

The Taraf makes no appeal to the left brain. For \$1 million you could buy every one of its obvious rivals simultaneously. But then, is a 200-foot yacht a rational decision? Or a Rembrandt?

Taraf means "ultimate luxury" in Arabic, and as its name suggests, the Lagonda Taraf is intended to be the first of a new line of sedans hoping to challenge Rolls-Royce and Bentley. Consider it a toe-dipping exercise to gauge demand in this most rarefied part of the market.

The car we're piloting was part of the original launch in Dubai, its Topaz Gold paintwork chosen to pop in the bright light of the desert. But even in the gloom of the English winter through which we are driving, the car stands out like a winning lottery ticket. Presence is an overused term when applied to cars, but the Taraf has enough of the stuff to charge admission. Despite those dorky British license plates, it's got all the DGAF of a concept car, plus a palpable air of menace. If Idi Amin were still alive, he'd be trading his Mercedes-Benz 600 Grosser for one.

The external body panels are made from carbon fiber but, beneath the surface, the Taraf is less radical. To describe it as an XL version of the Rapide S sedan downplays the huge effort that's gone into creating it. But it's also a fair summary of the truth. The Taraf sits on a stretched version of Aston's familiar VH aluminum architecture, with a wheelbase lengthened by eight inches over the Rapide's. Power comes from Aston's naturally aspirated 5.9-liter V-12 engine, here in 540-hp tune. Drive is sent to the rear wheels through an eight-speed automatic trans-axle mounted pretty much between the rear seats.



Get into the front and the Rapide impression is unmistakable. The Taraf shares the same dashboard and switchgear, and the front-door trim is nearly the same as its poorer four-door relation's. Sitting farther back puts average-sized drivers in uncomfortable proximity to the substantial B-pillar, limiting outward visibility, and the high beltline reinforces the impression that you're in a vast coupe.

Of course, typical Taraf buyers are only fractionally more likely to drive themselves than they are to pilot their own Gulfstream, which is why far more effort has been spent on the back of the car. It's pretty much the diametric opposite of the tight-fitting Rapide S's cryptic-like back seat, with all the wheelbase stretch going into extra legroom. It's not as spacious as its rivals, the rear seats don't recline, and they're still divided by a substantial leather-covered hillock, but it's definitely the most spacious rear cabin that Aston has produced since the last Lagonda.

Although the Taraf has been tuned to deliver comfort, it's fair to say that its fundamental Aston-ness has been buried

▼ SPECIFICATIONS

VEHICLE TYPE:	front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE (est)	\$1,000,000
ENGINE TYPE:	DOHC 48-valve V-12, aluminum block and heads, port fuel injection
DISPLACEMENT	362 cu in, 5935 cc
POWER	540 hp @ 6650 rpm
TORQUE	465 lb-ft @ 5500 rpm
TRANSMISSION:	8-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS	
WHEELBASE	125.6 in
LENGTH	212.5 in
WIDTH	75.5 in
HEIGHT	54.7 in
CURB WEIGHT	4500 lb
PERFORMANCE (C/D EST)	
ZERO TO 60 MPH	4.7 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH	10.6 sec
1/4-MILE	13.1 sec
TOP SPEED	195 mph
FUEL ECONOMY (C/D EST)	
CITY/HWY	14/22 mpg

Stretched and lean, the Taraf is a subtle play on the last Lagonda's styling. And like the alien Lagonda of the 1970s, the Taraf is based on contemporary Aston Martin coupes, making it a limousine built out of a sports car.



in a very shallow grave. The V-12 fires to life without the “look at me” blip that other AMs deliver when started, and the throttle pedal has been recalibrated for chauffeuring, with reactions slow enough to leave cocktails unspilled in the back. The eight-speed auto shuffles its ratios cleanly in drive and, on the whole, the Lagonda is entirely happy to be trickled along at motorcade speed.

But this isn't what it does best. The V-12 lacks low-down torque and needs to be worked hard to deliver its all, with bigger throttle openings encouraging the gearbox to hold on to gears longer. Alternatively, the driver can shift directly via the paddles behind the steering wheel. Although quiet by Aston standards, the exhaust is flatulent enough to encourage exploration of the upper reaches of the rev range, with impressive acceleration when you do.

The chassis copes well with our quest to tear up Merrie Olde England in a most un-limo-like fashion. Aston claims (though we're a bit skeptical) that the Taraf, thanks to its carbon bodywork, has an identical 4400-pound curb weight to the smaller Rapide S. It feels almost equally athletic to the Rapide when pushed. The hydraulically assisted steering is light but delivers usable feedback, and the chassis produces impressive lateral grip, even on rain-slicked roads. The brakes lack initial bite but have plenty of stopping power when pushed forcefully. It's downright hard not to drive at the sort of speed that would produce complaints, threats of beheading, or, at the very least, a sharp tap of a gold-tipped cane from the rear-seat occupants.

What the Lagonda doesn't deliver is the pillowy waftiness that buyers of luxury megasedans normally expect. The steel springs and conventional dampers do a good job maintaining discipline over rougher surfaces, and the longer wheelbase



SEVERE WEDGE STYLING AND POP-UP HEADLIGHTS? THE ASTON MARTIN LAGONDA SERIES 2 COULD ONLY HAVE COME FROM THE '70S. IT CARRIED THE WORLD'S FIRST DIGITAL DASH, WHICH ACTUALLY WORKED, SOMETIMES.

certainly helps improve the ride quality. But there's none of the magic-carpet impression delivered by the best of the Taraf's air-suspended rivals. Nor can the Taraf match their sepulchral hush; there's noticeable wind noise and road roar at speed. It feels like a sports car disguised as a limo, which is pretty much what it is.

The Taraf is an enormously likeable car. Whether it is seven-figure likeable is another matter. But if all your neighbors drive Bentley Mulsannes, or the valet captain at the Burj Khalifa asks which Mercedes-Maybach S600 is yours, then this could be the way to partake in the exclusivity of the sheiks. ■

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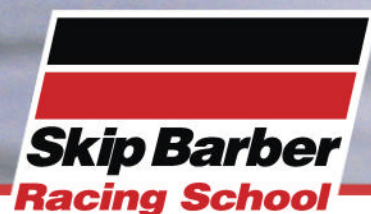
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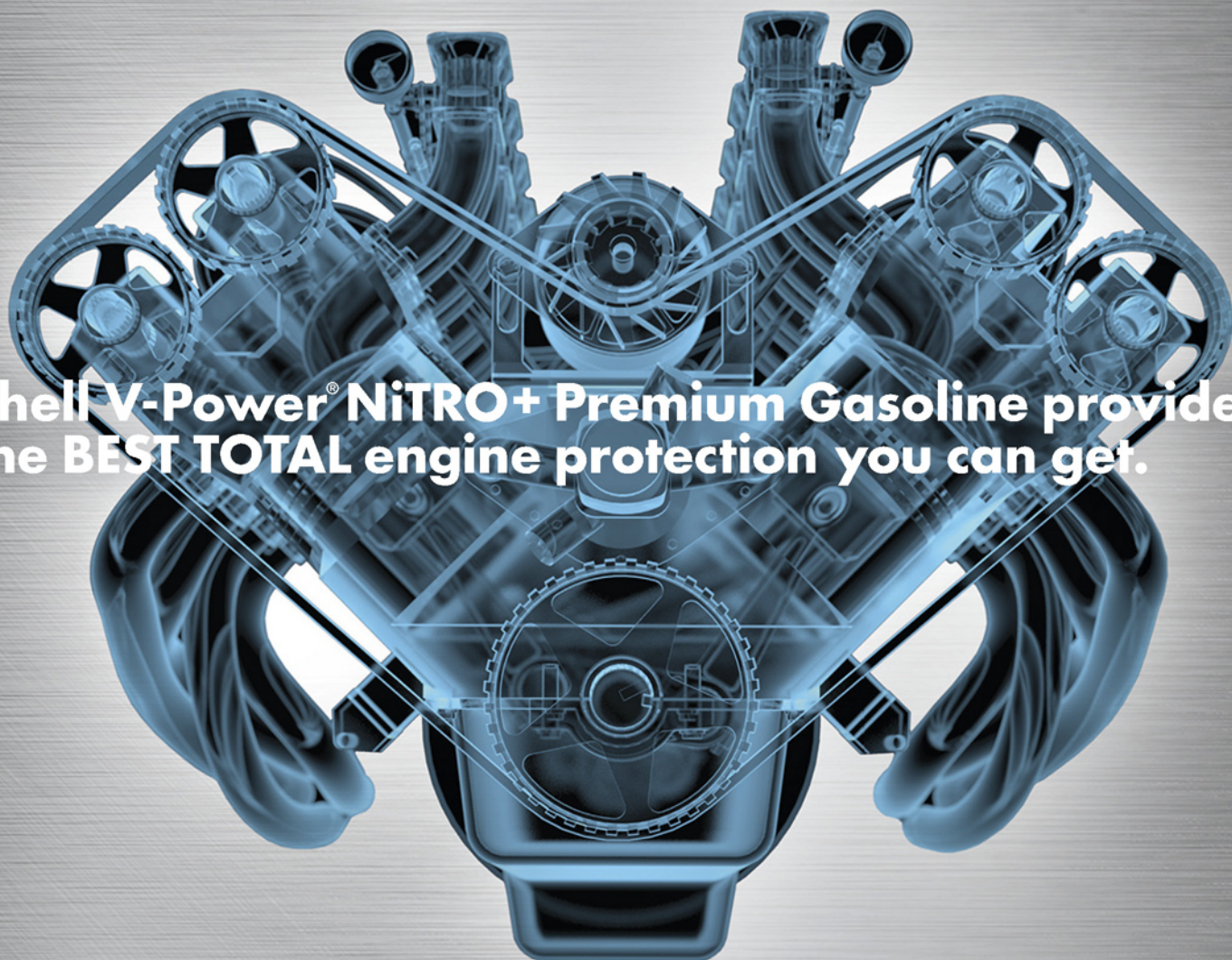
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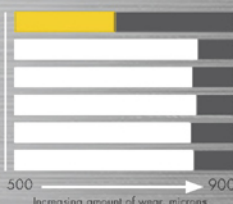


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Wear results obtained using gasoline-modified HFRR ASTM D6079.



• SEDAN

2017 MERCEDES-BENZ E300

Daimler's other smart car. *by Eric Tingwall*

In an industry that is fanatical about branding individual in-car features, it's easy to miss the bigger picture. Take, for example, the new Mercedes-Benz E-class, which christens its technologies with a jumble of cryptic capital-letter phrases such as Distance Pilot Distronic, Air Body Control, and Pre-Safe Impulse. But once bundled together and distilled to a single theme, the E's safety, connectivity, and semi-autonomous technologies make for a concise story. The E-class is a smart little car, indeed, much more so than the

↑ With the brainiac E-class, we've finally reached the point where the mechanical features of a new car seem incidental.

Smart, the twee city cart that's also built by Daimler-Benz.

This new E is a car for an age of smart devices, in which fridges alert you to milk gone bad and toilets text you when they need cleaning. Nine years ago, Mercedes introduced Attention Assist, an algorithm that monitored steering inputs and other parameters to detect a drowsy driver. While that feature, denoted in the cluster by the likeness of a steaming

cup of joe, continues to evolve for this new E-class, it's practically obviated by Mercedes' latest technology, Drive Pilot, which could just as easily be called "Inattention Assist." This driver aid uses half as many radar sensors as the S-class but still manages to trump the flagship's self-driving abilities. A single front-facing radar, a stereo camera behind the windshield, and sensors mounted in the rear corners allow for up to 60 seconds of hand-, foot-, and attention-free motoring on highways and rural roads. Changing lanes can be as simple as flashing the turn signal for two seconds.

In other words, Mercedes' driver-assistance suite now does everything Tesla's Autopilot does, albeit with the kind of self-imposed restraint you would expect from an automaker with 130 years

of experience. While Tesla's system drives until it can't, Mercedes requires the driver to periodically signal his or her consciousness by grabbing the steering wheel or poking one of the touch-sensitive pads on the spokes.

Let loose on a Portuguese highway, the E-class sailed with smoother steering, gentler braking, and slower lane changes than a Model S, a demeanor that suggests a more refined system, though not necessarily a more confident one.

Don't blame the lawyers for making you repeatedly touch the steering wheel. Engineer Jochen Haab, whose 12-person validation team includes three psychologists, says neither the technology nor the driver is ready for set-it-and-forget-it autonomy. He worries that drivers who turn their focus away from the road can't react fast enough when these self-driving systems lose the scent. True autonomy, Haab says, requires the ability to see and know what's beyond the 800-foot horizon of today's radar, laser, and camera sensors. Working toward that end, the E-class will be the first production vehicle in Europe equipped for car-to-X communication, where X can be other vehicles, infrastructure-based signals, or road-management agencies broadcasting alerts. We'll have to wait a couple of years before it's available on U.S. cars.

Rather than short-range, Wi-Fi-based car-to-car or car-to-infrastructure communication, the E-class sends and receives alerts through cloud-based servers via a cellular data connection. With a critical mass of vehicles and stationary sensors, Haab could get all the data he needs to provide an early warning of a traffic jam, an accident, or a pothole repair crew just around a blind bend.

Until then, whenever a human driver is making the mistakes, the E-class reserves the right to slam on the brakes or guide an evasive steering maneuver to dodge imperiled pedestrians or cars vying to occupy the same space as yours. The optional Pre-Safe Impulse system adds radar units to the front corners of the car

and inflatable bladders in the outboard bolsters of the front seats. It predicts an imminent side-impact collision and inflates the bladders—without damaging the seat—two-tenths of a second prior to impact, pushing the occupant inward, away from the B-pillar and the intruding car. Pre-Safe Sound plays pink noise (it sounds like a TV that's lost its signal) through the speakers to contract the stapedius muscles in your ears prior to a crash, reducing the risk of hearing damage during an accident. This is what a successful civilization looks like: fixes for problems you never even knew existed.



▼ SPECIFICATIONS

VEHICLE TYPE:	front-engine, rear- or 4-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door sedan
BASE PRICE (est)	\$52,000
ENGINE TYPE:	turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve inline-4, aluminum block and head, direct fuel injection
DISPLACEMENT	122 cu in, 1991 cc
POWER	241 hp @ 5500 rpm
TORQUE	273 lb-ft @ 1300 rpm
TRANSMISSION:	9-speed automatic with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS	
WHEELBASE	115.7 in
LENGTH	193.8 in
WIDTH	72.9 in
HEIGHT	57.8 in
TRUNK VOLUME	13 cu ft
CURB WEIGHT	3900-4050 lb
PERFORMANCE (C/D EST)	
ZERO TO 60 MPH	6.4-6.6 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH	16.3-16.5 sec
1/4-MILE	14.9-15.1 sec
TOP SPEED	130 mph
FUEL ECONOMY (C/D EST)	
EPA CITY/HWY	22-23/31-32 mpg

Indeed, a cellphone with Near Field Communication can unlock and start the car and eventually—belatedly—we Americans will also be allowed to park the car or extract it from a tight spot by tediously sliding our thumbs in circles on our phone's screen.

This E-class is a car so complex and so connected that its internal-combustion engine seems like an afterthought. Maybe it just needs a proper marketing name, something like Active Propulsion Assist.

When it goes on sale in June, the E-class will come with only a 2.0-liter turbo-charged four-cylinder. That engine makes the same 241 horsepower in the E300 as it does in the C300, but it's burdened with an extra 400 pounds in Mercedes' mid-sizer. While it never feels overtaxed, its presence in this car is absolutely the result of CO₂ and fuel-economy dictates, and the entry E-class will be slower than last year's base model. As consolation, the E300 should be slightly cheaper and more efficient than the car it replaces.

Those who want to drive rather than ride in their car may want to hold out for the AMG versions, now in both six-cylinder E43 and eight-cylinder E63 guises. A hearty diesel is due in late 2018, provided the smoggy fallout of the VW scandal clears by then, and a plug-in hybrid should arrive by the end of the decade. There will be E coupes, convertibles, and wagons as well, although we may be relegated to the All-Terrain variant of the latter, a lifted and kitted thing like Audi's Allroad.

Mercedes' new nine-speed automatic transmission pairs with either rear- or four-wheel drive. In comfort mode, the

↓ The E300 below knows this bicyclist's name, foot-skin temperature, and that he's in the wrong gear for this particular incline.



gearbox often reacts to full-throttle kick-downs with two distinct and slightly sluggish steps, but sport and sport-plus modes quickly erase that complaint. There, the gearbox holds a low gear and then snaps off perfectly timed, seamless shifts as you brake ahead of a turn. These gearchanges would be impressive in an AMG model.

The E-class fully upholds Mercedes' reputation for comfort and luxury, though. Even in its sportiest setting, the optional air-spring suspension never becomes firm. On a winding road, you'll notice how tightly the seat hugs you before you're aware that the steering is wholly unexcep-

tional. As novel as its technology is and as competent as its mechanicals are, the E-class is perhaps best bought for its sumptuous interior, optional beautifully quilted and perforated leather, and crisp 12.3-inch infotainment screen.

Of course, Mercedes hopes you'll think of the E-class's near-ability to drive itself as the ultimate luxury. Whether or not buyers embrace that, the new E-class is proof that we've arrived at the time when everything and anything can be a smart device—including the magazine you're holding in your hands. Check your text messages: It's time to turn the page.





LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR LP750-4 SUPERVELOCE

TESTED ☒ Overkill has never been more fascinating, four-wheel-drive burnouts, unflappably stable.
☐ Poorly defined limits, still heavy. *by Josh Jacquot*

The Lamborghini Aventador Superveloce has no carpet, sound deadening, USB ports, Bluetooth phone pairing, cruise control, nor any warning labels. And sometimes—like whenever its cooling fans operate—it produces mechanical noises no car this costly should make. It approaches its mission with the same subtlety Donald Trump employs when talking immigration.

In other words, it makes no apologies for being what it is: A brazen exotic made for those who enjoy center stage and have the resources to ensure they remain there. Did we mention it starts at \$497,895?

We spent a total of 70 hours with the SV. In that time it defined itself as the Big Italian Cheese that Lamborghini wants it to be. It is brash, unreserved, and charismatic, yet also very well-made and seemingly indifferent to a sound flogging. Aesthetically, it manages to be both ghastly and gorgeous. We want its phone number, badly, and

we don't want anyone to know about it.

The Superveloce, a lightened and more powerful version of the four-year-old Aventador, is a very fine piece of gratuitousness indeed. It was created as much for shock value as for driving reward. If the standard Aventador leverages the corporate paradigm shift that began with the Murciélago back in 2001, then the SV yanks at it with a composite crowbar.

Unsurprisingly, it's strikingly rapid. It will kiss 60 mph from a standstill in 2.7 seconds, storm the quarter-mile in 10.5 seconds at 136 mph, and stop from 70 mph in 147 feet. It generates 1.04 g's around the

skidpad and never acts as if it's working to perform any of these feats. It didn't once hint that it wanted to kill us, either.

Don't misunderstand; it is not perfect. With Lamborghinis, particularly special models like this one, the line between glory and absurdity is a fine one, pocked with compromise. But even an imperfect Lamborghini is a savage machine capable of inducing equal parts giddiness and disbelief. It produced the latter quite violently, even terrifyingly, by spinning all four tires on dry, clean pavement only blocks from our quiet, suburban home. But a car like this shouldn't be driven with the fear of what might happen. It should be driven because of it.

At 3868 pounds, the SV carries 217 less pounds than the last standard Aventador we weighed. The engine cover, wing, air intakes, door panels, rear diffuser, and seat shells are all carbon fiber.



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► Laser warning redesigned to fit within original-height case.

2001

Can you spot the difference?



► New LED display identifies each of four bands: X, K, Ka and laser.

1998

Can you spot the difference?



► Front and rear laser-warning added; requires taller case.

1997

Can you spot the difference?



► V1 debuts with radical new feature—the Radar Locator.

1992

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For the Superveloce, the big change to the Aventador's 6.5-liter V-12 is a freer-flowing exhaust. In combination with fresh calibrations for its variable valve timing and variable intake system, output climbs to 740 horsepower, up from the base car's 691. Peak power is achieved 100 rpm below redline at a shrill 8400 revs. Torque remains 509 pound-feet at 5500 rpm.

That it is powerful is without doubt. That its power alone justifies its price is somewhat less clear. On mountain roads that were only semi-familiar, the Aventador's usability wasn't as impressive as that of some less-pricey equipment. In fact, the superior grunt of a Chevy Corvette Z06 is more effective on roads with blind corners where maximizing entry speed is neither prudent nor possible. On a racetrack, where that concern vanishes, this drawback would disappear more rapidly than fuel from the SV's tank.

But not a single gas-station spectator will care or even attempt to understand such nuance. What they will notice is its size. There's a lot of Lamborghini here. Despite sharing its 106.3-inch wheelbase with the Honda Civic, the SV's low, wide proportions—and its massive overhangs—make it appear huge. It is wide. The same width, in fact, as a standard Ford F-250 pickup.

All of which, in combination with its shape and overall visibility, makes it a difficult machine to place on the road. City driving is attended by the constant fear of gnarling one of its forged wheels on a hidden curb. On the open road, however, the view over the low hood is vast and the countryside flies by in uninterrupted majesty.

This, naturally, makes you want to



↑ The SV's controls are supposed to inspire fighter-pilot fantasies. Makes us think of our old Motorola RAZR flip phone. Go figure.

drive it right to the icy, unforgiving limit. Its feedback, though, might give you other ideas. In practice, the steering is moderately weighted but lacks the granular feedback of the best systems—think Porsche Cayman. The SV's new electric power assist works with a variable-ratio mechanism in the column. The limits, especially as speed climbs, are high and press for more commitment. But their fuzzy edges diminish confidence.

What the Superveloce will not do, largely because its rear Pirelli P Zero Corsas are nearly four inches wider than its fronts, is oversteer. Barring senseless acts of pedal abuse, the rear tracks devoutly behind the front. And its single-clutch, seven-speed automated-manual transmission feels, well, old. The long gaps between gears in *strada* mode are as unnatural as they are out of character in a car this focused. Of course, switching to one of the other two modes (*sport* or *corsa*) increases shift speed, punches up

▼ SPECIFICATIONS

VEHICLE TYPE:	mid-engine, 4-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door coupe
PRICE AS TESTED	\$524,895
BASE PRICE	\$497,895
ENGINE TYPE:	DOHC 48-valve V-12, aluminum block and heads, port fuel injection
DISPLACEMENT	397 cu in, 6498 cc
POWER	740 hp @ 8400 rpm
TORQUE	509 lb-ft @ 5500 rpm
TRANSMISSION:	7-speed automated manual with manual shifting mode
DIMENSIONS	
WHEELBASE	106.3 in
LENGTH	190.4 in
WIDTH	79.9 in
HEIGHT	44.7 in
PASSENGER VOLUME	50 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME	5 cu ft
CURB WEIGHT	3868 lb

▼ C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH	2.7 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH	5.9 sec
ZERO TO 180 MPH	22.3 sec
ROLLING START, 5-60 MPH	3.3 sec
1/4-MILE	10.5 sec @ 136 mph
TOP SPEED (drag limited, mfr's claim)	217 mph
BRAKING, 70-0 MPH	147 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD	1.04 g
FUEL ECONOMY	
EPA CITY/HWY	11/18 mpg
C/D OBSERVED	8 mpg

■ **TEST NOTES:** Revs to just over 4000 rpm in launch-control mode, then shifts on its own once underway. The firm brake pedal is matched by inexhaustible brakes.

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throttle response, and stiffens the SV's new magnetorheological dampers. Full-throttle shifts in *corsa* snap through the cabin with enough force to visibly unnerv

Aventador SV virgins. So effective are the SV's standard carbon-ceramic brakes that stopping from 180 mph is like braking from freeway speeds in a Mazda MX-5 Miata. Inside, the base Aventador's design remains largely the same—minus some leather. It's a bare-carbon experience on the doors, tunnel, and floor. An all-new and all-yellow instrument cluster displays gears and engine speed most prominently.

The carbon shell-type seats lack anything resembling compliance, are too low for those of average build, and offer neither height nor seatback-angle adjustments. Your author sat on a booster cushion behind the wheel so that his ass—like his self-worth—was artificially elevated.

On the scale of grand driving tools, the Aventador ranks high. It is stupid fast, has world-class brakes, and makes fantastic grip. Its somewhat-elusive limits, however, keep it from rivaling the world's most rewarding driver's cars. Still, the Superveloce is special. It is a car unencumbered by ubiquity, order, or anything resembling normalcy. It is, in other words, a Lambo.

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HONDA CIVIC COUPE EX-L

TESTED  Eager-beaver turbo engine, ants-in-pants handling, clammed-up NVH.  Busy-beaver CVT, that baboon butt. *by Tony Quiroga*

The old Civic coupe is a minivan. Not literally. But after driving the new one, last year's model feels—there's no nice way to put this—like a gigantic Cheerio depository.

Gone are the thick and distant A-pillars, and the busy two-tier instrument panel is also out, replaced by a big tachometer front and center with a digital speedo inside. Honda moved the hip point—where your glutes hit the seat—way down. As you sit closer to the ground, the narrower A-pillars and the simple and elegant dashboard work to erase that old minivan feeling. The mom jeans are off; the Civic is back to being a car, a very good one.

Taut suspension tuning means body motions are quickly damped, and the

steering is alive. There's a Volkswagen GTI-like eagerness to the turn-in, complemented by excellent cornering stability. Skidpad grip is an unimpressive 0.83 g, mostly due to the all-season rubber, but every bit of that grip is accessible and easy to modulate. A firm brake pedal provides the right amount of initial bite, although the brakes did exhibit slight fade at the track. In testing, the sixth successive stop from 70 mph measured 10 feet more than the first stop, but the pedal pressure remained constant and secure.

A new structure lies under the new skin. Honda claims it's 25 percent stiffer than before. The structure dispatches big jolts with the brief *tuung!* of a tightly tuned tom-tom. Its predecessor had a hol-

▼ SPECIFICATIONS

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 2-door coupe
PRICE AS TESTED (est) \$25,500
BASE PRICE (est) \$24,500
ENGINE TYPE: turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve inline-4, aluminum block and head, direct fuel injection
DISPLACEMENT 91 cu in, 1497 cc
POWER 174 hp @ 6000 rpm
TORQUE 162 lb-ft @ 1700 rpm
TRANSMISSION: continuously variable automatic
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE 106.3 in
LENGTH 176.9 in
WIDTH 70.8 in
HEIGHT 54.9 in
PASSENGER VOLUME 89 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME 12 cu ft
CURB WEIGHT 2882 lb

▼ C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH 6.6 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH 16.9 sec
ZERO TO 120 MPH 27.3 sec
ROLLING START, 5-60 MPH 7.2 sec
1/4-MILE 15.1 sec @ 95 mph
TOP SPEED (governor limited) 125 mph
BRAKING, 70-0 MPH 173 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD 0.83 g
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA CITY/HWY (mfr's est) 31/41 mpg
C/D OBSERVED 29 mpg

TEST NOTES: Brake torque to 2800 rpm for a soft launch with no wheelspin. Acceleration is best in low-both sport and drive activate simulated shifts, which are slower. Nice brake-pedal feel.

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low and weedier structure that couldn't adequately suppress the engine or the suspension. Tire noise is still intrusive on concrete freeways, but the engine seems farther away now, and there's virtually no wind noise. You don't hear much at 70 mph, just 67 decibels of tire and mechanical hum, a five-decibel improvement over the old coupe.

Honda claims that the coupe's unibody is 76 pounds lighter than before, and it may be. But with all the pieces attached and a new turbocharged 1.5-liter four, this car weighs 2882 pounds, or 31 more than the last coupe we tested. That slight weight gain is more than offset by the engine, which makes 31 more horsepower and 33 more pound-feet of torque than the old 1.8-liter. Acceleration to 60 mph takes 6.6 seconds, a full two seconds quicker than before.

At this point, Honda's CVT automatic is the sole transmission for the 1.5-liter turbo. A big serving of turbo torque starts below 2000 rpm and keeps the CVT from having to zing into the higher revs in normal driving. In drive or sport mode, the

↑ A Civic coupe with a sensible instrument-panel layout, engaging dynamics, and attractive styling? Welcome back, Honda.

transmission "shifts" virtual gears and the changing revs eliminate the unrelenting high-rpm wail characteristic of CVTs. In low mode, the CVT does hold the engine near the redline from about 40 mph until the governor engages at 125 mph. We achieved the quickest acceleration times with the transmission in low. Stepping through the fake gears added a couple of tenths to zero-to-60 runs. And unlike the previous car's CVT, there isn't any way to select or hold "gears" if you wish to shift for yourself.

For now, manual enthusiasts have to settle for the naturally aspirated 158-hp 2.0-liter. Paired with the manual, the 2.0-liter has the rev-happy character of Honda engines past. But the easy torque and the extra horsepower of the turbo engine is seductive, so you may want to wait until later this year when Honda will offer a six-speed manual with the 1.5-liter turbo four.

In our hands, the EX-L with the 1.5-liter returned 29 mpg. EPA estimates are forthcoming, but we are told by Honda to expect an improvement: 31 city and 41 highway.

In addition to the old alien-spacecraft console, designers wisely threw out every other aspect of the previous generation. Material quality is hugely improved and the electric parking brake allows for a cavernous center console, but we'd still like to have a volume knob instead of having to swipe the border of the touchscreen. The seat cushions are Porsche firm, but some riders might find the lumbar support excessive.

Much of the exterior seems to have been designed to highlight the Civic's 1.8-inch-wider body. A chrome nose ring sits just above knee height, and the rear fenders flare out below the pinched-in rear window. The wheelbase has grown by 3.1 inches to 106.3, but the overall length is down an inch. Along with the added width, the longer wheelbase shortens overhangs and yields an assertive stance. The rear end is perhaps the oddest part of the styling, bulging outward in a way that may conjure up images of a robot with a full diaper.

Honda hadn't announced pricing when we went to press, but it assures us that the coupe will carry only a slight premium over the sedan. Take that to mean a range from \$20,000 to nearly \$28,000. We'd estimate that our EX-L with the Honda Sensing package that adds active cruise and lane-departure, blind-spot, and forward-collision warnings will cost \$25,500. Going to the top Touring level adds nav, a 10-speaker stereo, and LED headlights.

The Civic coupe is a return to form for Honda. But as good as the Civic is, we would wait for the turbo to hook up with the manual before signing any forms.

MINI COOPER CONVERTIBLE

Let's get (less) serious. *by Joe Lorio*

The Mini Cooper has always been a determinedly light-hearted car, what with its puppy-dog styling, candy-dish colors, and cheeky marketing. And the Convertible, with its wind-in-the-hair and suntan priorities, is guaranteed to be extra silly.

It's been that way since the BMW-engineered Mini added a convertible variant for 2005. The follow-up version introduced the Openometer, which tallies the all-important metric of top-down time. This generation's new frivolity is an available softtop that features a giant Union Jack graphic. Oh, and the Mini Connected app can alert you to an approaching rain shower.

Raising—or lowering—the top takes 18 seconds and can be performed at speeds up to 18 mph. And, as in previous Mini convertibles, the front portion can retract like a sunroof. Lowered, the top's stack cuts into rear visibility, making the backup camera a \$500 must-have.

Elsewhere, the new Convertible parallels the changes to the latest Hardtop. It's considerably larger, boasts a nicer interior with more tech features, and offers two new engines: a 134-hp 1.5-liter turbo three-cylinder in the base Cooper and a 189-hp 2.0-liter turbo four in the S. The John

Cooper Works model (which is being launched almost simultaneously) gets the turbo four in 228-hp strength. Each offers a six-speed automatic or a six-speed stick.

Our drive was limited to the Cooper S, which feels fairly quick—we estimate a zero-to-60-mph time of 6.8 seconds—although booting the throttle at lower speeds brings a tug of torque steer. The automatic is more economical (25 city/34 highway mpg versus the manual's 23/33), but the stick, with its easy shift action

▼ SPECIFICATIONS

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, front-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door convertible	
BASE PRICE	\$26,800-\$30,450
ENGINES: turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 12-valve 1.5-liter inline-3, 134 hp, 162 lb-ft; turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve 2.0-liter inline-4, 189 hp, 207 lb-ft	
TRANSMISSIONS: 6-speed manual, 6-speed automatic with manual shifting mode	
DIMENSIONS	
WHEELBASE	98.2 in
LENGTH	151.1-151.9 in
WIDTH	68.0 in
HEIGHT	55.7 in
PASSENGER VOLUME	76 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME	6-8 cu ft
CURB WEIGHT	3000-3200 lb
PERFORMANCE (C/D EST)	
ZERO TO 60 MPH	6.8-7.6 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH	18.0-21.3 sec
1/4-MILE	15.2-16.1 sec
TOP SPEED	128-143 mph
FUEL ECONOMY	
EPA CITY/HWY	23-27/33-38 mpg

and friendly clutch, is still our preference. DIY shifting also saves a chunk of change, as the automatic is \$1250 extra (or \$1500 with shift paddles).

Despite structural bracing in the rocker panels, a stiffening plate under the engine, and torsional reinforcement struts, we detected some cowl quiver as we rolled through L.A. Mini has earned a reputation for a harsh ride, but with the optional Dynamic Damper Control in normal mode, the Convertible wasn't bad in that regard. Out in the hills and canyons, however, we definitely preferred the sport mode's firmer body control, which helps this larger, heavier Mini better live up to the brand's promise of lively cornering.

In the Hardtop, the faraway windshield makes it seem as if you're peering through goggles, but in the top-down Convertible, it emphasizes the alfresco experience. That's an experience best enjoyed by two, as there's precious little room to wedge one's sneakers between the front seatbacks and the rear-seat cushion when getting in, and rear-seat riders must sit bolt upright.

With the demise of the brand's two-place Roadster—it and its sibling Coupe model proved too ridiculous, even for Mini—the Convertible is now the sole offering for sun-seeking Mini buyers. The Convertible's frivolity, however, doesn't extend to its price. The standard tariffs of \$26,800 for the Cooper and \$30,450 for the S are reasonable, but as is typical with the third-generation Mini, option prices add up quickly. Each of the two Cooper S Convertibles we drove was nearly \$40,000, a figure that isn't so frivolous, really.



→ A Mini that's not adorable is just a pricey small car. With the Mini Convertible, maximum adorability is only 18 seconds away.



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CHEVROLET CAMARO LT RS V-6

TESTED **+** Prompts few “could’ve had a V-8” regrets.
□ Roof- and beltlines pinch outward visibility, narrow access to the back seat and trunk. *by Don Sherman*

Six-cylinder engines are legitimately desirable in imports—BMWs, Jaguars, Porsches—yet in pony cars they’ve always been plagued by the Rodney Dangerfield syndrome. As the old Camaro/Challenger/Mustang rap goes, V-8s are for those serious about performance, V-6s are for secretarial pools and rental fleets.

While Dodge and Ford both offer V-6s with 300 or more horsepower, the home of the Hemi and the house of EcoBoost don’t have their hearts in those engines. This gives Chevy the opportunity to indulge in the joy of six with its freshly revitalized Camaro. We don’t have secretaries anymore, and during our most recent 10Best trial, we noticed that the 3.6-liter, 335-hp LGX V-6 the Camaro shares with four Cadillacs is a palatable alternative to a honking V-8. Times have indeed changed.

The Camaro LT tested here rings in at \$35,150, uplifted from a base four-cylinder with a \$1495 V-6, \$895 dual-mode exhaust, and a \$1950 RS package (20-inch wheels and tires, high-tech lighting, and a few sporty trim pieces). That’s the high end of affordability, but oh, what you get. It snarls unlike any American V-6, and the 223-pound-lighter nose relative to the V-8 version’s makes it a back-road Baryshnikov.

This V-6’s appetite for rpm shot us to 60 mph in 5.1 seconds and to 103 mph in the quarter-mile in 13.7, quicker by 0.4 second in both measures than a 3.7-liter V-6 Mus-

↑ The V-6 Camaro pulls smartly, handles sharply, and sounds fantastic. Sure, we’d still opt for the V-8, but we’re just like that.

tang. The last Challenger V-6 we tested, equipped with an eight-speed automatic, was a full second off the Camaro’s pace.

GM’s four-cam V-6 flaunts its spunk by pulling smartly from 1800 rpm and by tickling the sound meter with rich resonance at 5000 rpm. At the 7000-rpm redline, four tailpipes spout speed metal.

The chassis is nicely balanced thanks to the engineers’ weight-saving and stiffness-enhancing accomplishments. The V-6 is tucked back as far as is practical, the battery lives in the trunk, and various suspension and structural components are aluminum. We measured 0.91 g worth of skidpad stick running on 245/40R-20 Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric All Season radials. The body is flat and nicely damped at the adhesion limit, and the understeer never goes nasty. The electrically assisted steering is perfectly weighted and provides aggressive turn-in response. Clearly, a car junkie tuned the communications channel from the road to the driver’s hands.

The bad news is the cave that the Camaro’s interior has become. While the sixth generation’s cockpit excels in functionality, the exterior designers hiked up the trousers and cocked the Camaro’s beret to leave little more than peepholes for spotting traffic. The front buckets provide excellent lateral and thigh support,

▼ SPECIFICATIONS

VEHICLE TYPE: front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 2-door coupe
PRICE AS TESTED \$35,150
BASE PRICE \$30,140
ENGINE TYPE: DOHC 24-valve V-6, aluminum block and heads, direct fuel injection
DISPLACEMENT 222 cu in, 3640 cc
POWER 335 hp @ 6800 rpm
TORQUE 284 lb-ft @ 5300 rpm
TRANSMISSION: 6-speed manual
DIMENSIONS
WHEELBASE 110.7 in
LENGTH 188.3 in
WIDTH 74.7 in
HEIGHT 53.1 in
PASSENGER VOLUME 80 cu ft
TRUNK VOLUME 9 cu ft
CURB WEIGHT 3469 lb

▼ C/D TEST RESULTS

ZERO TO 60 MPH 5.1 sec
ZERO TO 100 MPH 13.0 sec
ZERO TO 140 MPH 34.1 sec
ROLLING START, 5-60 MPH 6.0 sec
1/4-MILE 13.7 sec @ 103 mph
TOP SPEED (governor limited) 151 mph
BRAKING, 70-0 MPH 152 ft
ROADHOLDING, 300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD 0.91 g
FUEL ECONOMY
EPA CITY/HWY 18/27 mpg
C/D OBSERVED 18 mpg

■ TEST NOTES:

Launches nicely with a 4000-rpm clutch engagement and a feathered throttle. Perfectly stable at its 151-mph top speed.



though the slide into them includes a but-tocks bite by the outboard seatbelt anchor. The front belts also serve as tripwires for those brave enough to attempt rear-seat entry. That’s a pity because the back perches are comfortable—except for their shortage of head, knee, and foot space.

Most of the interior is finished in hard, black plastic but executed nicely enough not to be oppressive. At least there’s no hassle using the reconfigurable instrument cluster, infotainment system, and climate controls. Twisting the oversized vent registers sets cabin temperature. A parking brake that automatically releases when you drive off is handy, and the options list includes a wireless charging pad and a head-up display.

While Mustang fans might look wistfully in the direction of the new Camaro’s numbers, Ford fan defections are unlikely. That said, this car’s gutsy V-6 should draw a few import owners to the Chevy fold. ■

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BURT REYNOLDS

*Nobody was a bigger star than Burt Reynolds in the '70s. And his biggest film was 1977's *Smokey and the Bandit*. Now 80, his recent memoir is *But Enough About Me*.*

C/D: When you were growing up in Florida, how important were cars to kids back then? Did you have a car?

BR: Actually it was a huge status symbol. Our family really didn't have a car; we had my dad's police cruiser. Later he got a Buick, and that's what I was driving when I had a wreck. I'm lucky it was as big and strong as it was, because that Buick is what saved my life. I had an Indian Scout motorcycle during high school, but I never could take it to school. My dad would sneak out at night and pull the spark-plug wires.

C/D: Stuntman Hal Needham was your friend, roommate, and director. How did that work?

BR: I had known Hal for a while by the time he moved in, so I was sure we'd get along well, and we did. He'd go off and do his gigs and I would do mine, and when we were lucky we got to work on the same ones. *Smokey and the Bandit* was the first picture he directed, and I knew he could handle it. I had just directed *Gator*, and he saw my style and used that as a pattern.

C/D: Did *Smokey and the Bandit* feel like a hit while you were filming it?

BR: It was a bit of a lark when I agreed to do it, and I knew we'd have fun if we could get Jackie Gleason. But then we got Sally Field onboard and it changed the entire dynamic. About a third of the way into filming, I was in the car with Sally and there was this little moment where we kind of looked at each other, and then we both turned and looked over at Hal. He gave us a thumbs up and said, "Yeah!" And we kind of knew there was some magic going on.

C/D: Is it hard to play a character like Bo "Bandit" Darville who, many people assume, is like you?

BR: Funny you should ask that, because I'm really much more like Phil Potter from [the 1979 film] *Starting Over*. People do think I'm the Bandit, and I'm a lot more serious than that. But he helped me lighten up a little bit. He loves country, and I love jazz. He is a scofflaw while I totally respect it since my dad was the chief of police when I was growing up.

C/D: You sold a lot of Trans Ams. Did you get a free car?

BR: Trans Am sales went up 70 percent after *Smokey and the Bandit*, and I was promised a free car every year for life by the Pontiac president. A few years later, the new Trans Am didn't show up, and I was wondering what happened. So, just to make sure there wasn't some kind of an accident with shipping or something or maybe it got stolen, I made a call and it turned out Pontiac had a new president. He got on the phone and told me: "That was the old president. He liked your movies. I'm the new one. I don't like your movies!"

C/D: You have reportedly said that filming 1983's *Stroker Ace* was a turning point in your career. Was it a mistake?

BR: It's strange the way things get taken out of context. I love



Stroker Ace. I love the whole team. Jim Nabors really stole the show, and Ned Beatty, well I've made more of my movies with Ned Beatty than anybody else. The mistake was not doing *Terms of Endearment* because I was scheduled to do *Stroker*. All I had to do was ask Hal to wait. That was a mistake.

C/D: How do *Gator*, *McKlusky* from *White Lightning* (1973) and *Gator* (1976) relate to *Smokey's Bo Darville*?

BR: *Gator* was a criminal and a felon, but he had a good heart—he's probably a cousin to Bo. Bo was not a felon and definitely never wanted to hurt anybody—the final scene confirms that. He confesses to Buford T. Justice that he is right behind him. *Gator* *McKlusky* would not have done that.

C/D: You've done a lot of car movies. Which is the best one?

BR: Definitely *Smokey*—it was so much fun. With *Smokey II* we added Dom DeLuise into the mix. So that's a very close second. The first *Cannonball* was really something, but the second one had so many cameos it really was not as much fun on set. I knew that whole thing had run its course at that point.

C/D: In *The Longest Yard*, did you all have fun beating up that poor Citroën SM?

BR: That was a great car. I hated to do that, but I had fun driving it. That opening scene is oftentimes overlooked, and I think it qualified Paul Crewe as a car guy.

C/D: What would you have done differently?

BR: Not a thing. Well maybe spend more money... but like I say at the end of my book: Nobody had more fun than me.

—JOHN PEARLEY HUFFMAN

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